



LIBRARY OF HEAVEN'S PATH

BOOK 12

Heng Sao Tian Ya

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Library of Heaven's Path

(Tian Dao Du Shu Guan)

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Synopsis

Zhang Xuan traverses into a foreign world and becomes an honorable teacher. A mysterious library appears in his mind. As long as it is something he has seen, regardless of whether it is a human or an object, a book on its weakness would be automatically compiled. Thus, he became formidable.

“Emperor Haotian, why don’t you like to wear underwear? To think that you’re still an emperor, can you pay more attention to your image?”

“Fairy Linglong, if you continue to suffer from insomnia, you can always look for me. I have a way with lullabies!”

“You as well, Qiankun Demon Lord, can you cut down on the garlic? Do you want to stink me to death?”

...

This is an incredible story about the heritage between teacher and students, cultivating and guiding the world’s strongest experts.

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Chapter 1101: Is Your Xuanxuan Faction Still Recruiting? (1)

Xiao Qin's lips twitched.

This sudden encirclement... Was he going to have to challenge a group single-handedly, and was the group going to 'single-handedly' challenge him?

Individually, they were all weaker than him, but the overwhelming fighting will that was reflected in his eyes left him feeling as if he was a prey standing amidst a group of predators... Didn't they come from a weaker vassal state of Qingyuan Empire? Weren't they exhausted from their long journey?

Not only was there not the slightest hint of exhaustion from them, their eyes were even gleaming in excitement. It was almost as if they were waiting for him.

"I am at Saint 1-dan pinnacle. Is there any one of you who is at the same cultivation realm as me?" Xiao Qin asked.

Since he was going to test the strength of the Xuanxuan Faction, it would only be a fair assessment if he were to face someone who was of the same cultivation realm as him. Otherwise, facing a weaker opponent, even if he were to suppress his cultivation, he would still be able to easily subdue his opponent with his superior battle experience and eye of discernment. That would be no different from bullying his opponent.

And of course, if he were to play it fair, hopefully, the other party would be too embarrassed order a lynching on him too...

"Saint 1-dan?" Ruohuan gongzi frowned.

Their Xuanxuan Faction mostly consisted of freshmen, and it had only been several months since the start of the school term. Despite the incredible speed of their cultivation, their strongest member was still only at Perfect Harmonization realm. Thus, to

find a member who had reached Saint realm was... Hmmmm? It seemed like they did have a Saint 1-dan pinnacle member amongst them after all!

"Invite Senior Qiqi over!" Ruohuan gongzi turned around and issued an instruction to a nearby member.

The member swiftly sprinted away, and not too long later, Luo Qiqi appeared in the courtyard.

So far, other than the monstrous Zhang Xuan, this young lady was the strongest member of their faction.

"My apologies, but it seems like Senior Qiqi is the only one who has achieved a cultivation of Saint 1-dan pinnacle in our Xuanxuan Faction. Why don't you... have a duel with her then?" Ruohuan gongzi said a little awkwardly.

Luo Qiqi was an individual who had received the individual guidance directly from Principal Zhang, so her cultivation and eye of discernment were far beyond the other members. It did seem like they were bullying the other party by having him face her.

"You want me to fight against a woman?" Xiao Qin frowned.

He was an unparalleled genius of the Combat Master Hall. Be it in terms of zhenqi, physical resilience, reaction speed, and the such, he was far superior to his other peers. To randomly find a woman to face him... Weren't they looking down on him a little bit too much?

"What's wrong with facing a woman?" Luo Qiqi frowned in displeasure. Raising her hands, she beckoned, "Make your move!"

"Since that's the case, pardon me then!" Upon the other party's insistence, Xiao Qin sighed lightly and did a gentlemanly bow. After which, he drove his zhenqi throughout his body, and an aura overflowing with strength surged from his body.

Hu!

Xiao Qin took a step forward, and his figure abruptly disappeared.

As a Thousand Men Commander of the Martial Arts Division, he specialized specifically in martial arts. It was just a single step forward, but there were at least seven to eight transformations contained in it. In an instant, multiple identical figures all around him, making it impossible for one to determine which direction he was going to attack from.

Battle technique, Steps of Thousand Illusory Shadows!

Steps of Thousand Shadows was a battle technique which was created by a Primordial Spirit realm expert of the Combat Master Hall two thousand years ago. It could produce multiple illusory figures around one, making it impossible for one to determine one's location. This would, in turn, make the opponent vulnerable to one's attacks.

Even though his opponent was a woman, he still chose to go all out right from the start.

This was also one of the core teachings of the Combat Master Hall—Never underestimate any opponent that you are facing!

Huala!

As soon as the Steps of Thousand Illusory Shadows was executed, he raised his finger to serve as his sword and directed it against the opponent before him.

This was also a battle technique, known as the Rising Crouching Dragon. It was known for its swift and precise movements, reminiscent of a dragon swiftly subduing its prey, making it an extremely difficult move to guard against.

Even within the Combat Master Hall, there were hardly any peers who could equal him whenever he executed the two powerful battle techniques in unison.

"Not too bad!"

The young lady chuckled. Without resorting to any huge movements or battle techniques, she simply raised her hand and smacked downward.

It was a very simple palm strike!

Yet, for some reason, Xiao Qin felt as if his movement technique had been completely suppressed by the other party. It was sensation similar to being cornered by a predator; no matter where he attempted to do, there was no way he could avoid that palm strike.

"What is that move?"

Xiao Qin's eyes narrowed in shock, and cold sweat trickled down his back.

While the young lady's moves seemed simple enough, it was exquisitely executed in a manner which sealed all of the transformations in his battle techniques. It seemed like no matter how he moved, there would only be a single conclusion—he would be sent flying by that palm strike!

"It seems like I can only clash with her forcefully..." As expected of a genius of the Combat Master Hall, Xiao Qin was able to derive the best solution to his current plight in an instant. Since he was unable to dodge the palm strike, he would only find himself defeated if he were to attempt all of his transformations desperately to escape. Thus, he gritted his teeth and raised his palm as well.

He might have lost in a battle of skill against the young lady, but he wouldn't necessarily lose in a battle of strength.

While his defense wasn't as formidable as that group of monsters from the Protector Division, his zhenqi and physical body resilience had still reached a fairly decent level. At the very least, he would be able to overpower most cultivators in a direct clash of power, let more a female cultivator who was unlikely to specialize

in strength.

Hu!

Just as he was about to thrust his palm forward to meet the other party's, the young lady figure abruptly blurred before disappearing from his sight altogether.

"Shit..." Realizing that he had erred, cold sweat trickled down Xiao Qin's body.

He had thought that the other party had intended to clash directly with him, so he had gathered all of his strength into his palm strike. Yet... it was actually a feint!

"AHHHHH!!" With a furious battle cry, Xiao Qin swiftly withdrew his attack and backed away.

Considering how he had been using his full strength, it was impressive that he was able to pull back his palm strike and retreat so quickly. However, it was a pity that he was still a step too slow. A powerful might suddenly pressed down from behind him, and even before it struck, he could already feel his organs being torn apart by the incredible might.

"I won't be able to make it in time..." Knowing that by the time it was too late for him to turn around and meet the other party's attack, he quickly drove all of his zhenqi towards his back to ward off the force of the attack as much as he could.

At this point, he could only endure the strike and try to find a way to counterattack later on.

Gugu!

Anticipating a powerful strike landing on his back, he gritted his teeth and mentally resolved himself to withstand the strike. However, the powerful aura which had gathered behind him abruptly dissipated, and the pressure of the attack dissipated all of a sudden.

Bewildered, he anxiously turned around, only to see that the young lady had already retreated eight steps away. Standing calmly on the spot, as if not having moved at all, she calmly said, "You have lost."

Pu!

Right after those words were spoken, Xiao Qin's face suddenly turned ghastly pale, and a spurt of blood gushed from his mouth. It was only in this instant did he realize that he had been completely sapped of his strength, and even remaining on his feet had become an incredibly arduous task for him.

It didn't take him long for him to realize what was going on. Even though he had never directly clashed with the young lady throughout the fight, he had been forced to retract his zhenqi twice within a short duration of time, and the impact from doing so had caused immense damage to his body.

To be able to induce severe internal damage within him without even crossing blows... the young lady's comprehension of combat and battle techniques were truly fearsome!

At this point, Xiao Qin had no choice but to admit that he wasn't a match for the other party.

After recuperating for a moment, Xiao Qin stood up with a depressed look on his face and sighed deeply before conceding, "I have lost."

He had thought that the rumors concerning the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy were mostly exaggeration, but after facing the young lady, he realized that the notion he had couldn't be more wrong.

He couldn't even withstand the might of a random woman within the Xuanxuan Faction, so how incredible would their top-notch expert be?

"Actually, your zhenqi, physical body strength, agility, and

reaction speed are all not bad. What that is truly limiting you is your battle techniques!" Seeing Xiao Qin's gloomy look, Luo Qiqi consoled.

"My battle techniques are limiting me?" Hearing those words, Xiao Qin's mouth twitched, suffering an even greater blow than before.

He was the greatest genius of the Combat Master Hall's Martial Arts division. Despite being only at Saint 1-dan, he had already grasped four Saint low-tier battle techniques!

It could be said that other than the Thousand Men Commanders whose cultivation were higher than him, there were no peers who possessed a deeper understanding of martial arts than him...

Despite such, the other party actually said that... his battle techniques were limiting him! This was a direct slap to his face!

"You don't believe me?" Luo Qiqi chuckled softly, not offended by Xiao Qin's response at all. "You can ask any student here and have them evaluate your performance in the fight earlier!"

"Evaluate? They will evaluate me?" Shaking his head, Xiao Qin looked at the several thousand students around him.

Most of them were at Perfect Harmonization realm, and there were some who were still only at Consonant Spirit realm. He wouldn't even spare an additional glance at such cultivators on the streets, and yet, to have them evaluate his performance...

Were they able to see through the essence of his moves?

Were they able to understand how profound his moves were?

Evaluate his performance?

What a joke!

"You seem to doubt my words. Do you feel that they are unable to see through the flaws in your battle technique due to their limited cultivation?" Luo Qiqi shook his head. "It's not that I want to

traumatize you, but with your current comprehension of battle technique, even if you were to suppress your cultivation and fight with any one of them here, you won't survive past two blows!"

"Any one of them here?" Xiao Qin's complexion turned extremely awful. "I know that I have lost to you, but I have to ask you not to humiliate me like that!"

No matter what, he was still an expert of the Combat Master Hall. To claim that he would be unable to receive two blows from Perfect Harmonization realm cultivators... that was blatantly making a mockery out of him!

"Senior Luo Qiqi is right, your strength is indeed very lacking."

"Even if you were to lower your cultivation and fight with you, you still wouldn't be a match!"

"We aren't deceiving you. Your comprehension of battle techniques is truly appalling..."

Seeing the indignant look on Xiao Qin's face, the crowd began remarking.

They were looking forward to the arrival of an expert who would allow them to go all out, but who knew that he would turn out to be so weak in the end. Honestly speaking, they couldn't help but feel deeply disappointed.

Since the Combat Master Hall was going to challenge them, why didn't they send a couple of stronger combat masters?

Given how appalling that fellow's comprehension of battle techniques was, it was as good as sending them a sandbag to pummel!

Hai!

Everyone in the room couldn't help but sigh deeply in lamentation.

"You all... Very well! I was afraid that it would be too much if I

were to suppress my cultivation and challenge the rest of you, but since that's what you all think, let's do it then!" Hearing the sighs and seeing the disappointed looks around him, Xiao Qin was on the verge of exploding. Unable to take it any longer, he consumed a recovery pill to heal from his injuries before suppressing his cultivation is a roar. In the blink of an eye, his cultivation had fallen to Cosmos Bridge realm pinnacle.

"I have already suppressed my cultivation. Is there anyone who wishes to fight against me?" Xiao Qin scanned his surroundings and he declared coldly.

"Cosmos Bridge realm pinnacle? Many of us are at that cultivation realm here, so feel free to pick..." Seeing that the other party was still intent on challenging them, Ruohuan gongzi shook his head and replied.

"Alright!" Seeing how the leader of the Xuanxuan Faction was fearlessly asking him to have his pick, Xiao Qin couldn't help but feel as if his face had been slapped once again. Gritting his teeth in anger, he scanned the surroundings and selected an ordinary-looking young man. That person seemed to be in his early twenties, and with fair complexion and a slender physique, he had an appearance reminiscent of a weak scholar.

"You want to fight with me?" The person who was specifically pointed out widened his eyes in shock, as if he had just won the lottery.

"That's right!" Xiao Qin flung his hands majestically.

"I can fight with you, but you are injured at the moment. I would be bullying you if I were to fight with you like that..." After hesitating for a moment, a hint of excitement flashed across the eyes of the young man as he spoke earnestly. "Why don't I tie both of my hands up then? I'll fight against you without my hands... It should be fairer this way!"

Chapter 1102: Is Your Xuanxuan Faction Still Recruiting? (2)

"Tie up both of your hands? Fairer?" Xiao Qin staggered, and he nearly fainted on the spot.

Are you suggesting that it would only be fair fight against me after you tie up both of your hands?

Aren't you underestimating me too much!

I, a powerful Saint 1-dan pinnacle expert, am challenging you to a fight, and yet, you think that I would only be a match for you with both of your hands tied?

A sharp pain assaulted Xiao Qin's chest, leaving him feeling as if he would spurt blood at any moment.

"If you think that you will be able to withstand my attacks, do whatever you please!" Xiao Qin clenched his jaws so tightly that his teeth were on the verge of chipping, but he also knew that there was no point getting angry.

Thus, he took a deep breath to calm his state of mind before rushing forward.

The woman earlier was a Saint 1-dan expert just like him, and she was incredibly talented as well, so it was one thing for him to lose to her. He didn't believe that he would lose to a random individual whom he had picked from a group of several thousand people as well.

Huala!

With his fingers hooked like claws, his hands darted forward with a sharp gust of wind.

Battle technique, Thunderbolt Heart Ripping Claws!

While this technique hadn't reached Saint low-tier yet, it was

well-known for its astounding prowess amongst Spirit pinnacle battle techniques. Upon reaching Major Accomplishment for this technique, one would be capable of pulling off lightning-swift movements that could mess with the opponent's momentum, making it extremely difficult to deal with.

But of course, just the ability to mess with the opponent's momentum wouldn't justify the incredible infamy it had. What that truly instilled fear in the hearts of the cultivators was how callous the technique was.

Everything that the claw latched itself onto would be torn off at lightning speed. If a cultivator were to put his guard down for a moment while facing this technique, his heart could very well be ripped out in the next moment.

It was due to how vicious the technique was that most master teachers would steer clear of it. However, these were the exact techniques that combat masters required to overwhelm their opponents in battle. The more vicious a technique was, the more likely that it would be effective in subduing or even killing their opponent. As a result, Xiao Qin had already reached an incredible mastery in the technique,

Huala!

Just as the Thunderbolt Heart Ripping Claws was about to land on its target, the scholarly young man suddenly took a quick step and dodged to the side. It was an extremely puzzling sight. The scholarly young man's movements were visibly far slower than Xiao Qin's, but for some reason, the scholarly young man was able to easily dodge his assault easily, as if having predicted the trajectory of his attack. On top of that, while the scholarly young man made the evasive maneuver, he lifted his leg and kicked it forcefully towards Xiao Qin's lower body as well.

Facing the attack, Xiao Qin's eyes narrowed.

He thought that the young man whom he had chosen out would

only be average at best, but the movements made by the other party made him realize that he was sorely mistaken. The other party was far more terrifying than he had expected.

The Thunderbolt Heart Ripping Claws was extremely powerful, but the enhanced speed came at the expense of stability in his lower body. On top of that, the other party's kick was accurately aimed at a location which he would definitely have to guard against but it was extremely awkward for him to do so.

"Thousand Leaf Threading Hands!" Knowing that he could be incapacitated if the kick were to land, Xiao Qin hurriedly opened up his claws and stroked the area in front of him gently.

It was a light movement reminiscent of a musician stroking its zither, but it was far more lethal than it looked.

The Thousand Leaf Treading Hands was a battle technique created by a demonic tunist. While its movements seemed completely harmless on the surface, in truth, every single finger harnessed a powerful surge of sword qi which could devastate any opponent easily.

The switch between the Thunderbolt Heart Ripping Claw to the Thousand Leaf Treading Hands was swiftly and seamless, devoid of the slightest lag in between, as if they were transformations of the same technique. This feat in itself showed that Xiao Qin's reputation as the genius of the Martial Arts Division wasn't just for show.

His mastery over his battle techniques had indeed reached an incredible level.

However, as incredible his movements were, he was still outdone by his opponent. Seemingly having anticipated Xiao Qin's movements, the scholarly young man leaped into the sky and accurately kicked his fingers with the tip of his feet.

Kacha! Kacha!

As the immense force gathered in the scholarly young man's feet collided with Xiao Qin's fingers, the crisp sound of bone shattering echoed resoundingly in the air. Before Xiao Qin could recover from this blow, a black shadow abruptly covered his view. A leg was headed straight for his face.

Peng!

Xiao Qin was sent crashed into the ground, and blood spurted uncontrollably from his move.

He struggled back to his feet with disbelief in his eyes.

He realized that from the start to the end, the scholarly young man really hadn't used his hands at all. Yet, the other party was still able to defeat him so easily!

While he did lose to the Saint 1-dan pinnacle woman earlier on, he could rationalize his defeat as the woman being the most talented genius in the Xuanxuan Faction. But the scholarly young man was someone whom he had chosen at random, a mere Cosmos Bridge realm cultivator... and yet, he didn't even survive two attacks from the other party!

Could it be that there was truly a mistake in the battle techniques that he cultivated?

"There's no need to get depressed." the scholarly young man consoled. "Your fighting prowess is not too bad, it's just a pity that you met me! But well... I guess you could also count it as a blessing in disguise too, because I am one of the weaker members of the Xuanxuan Faction.

"Your moves are swift and powerful, and your ability to transit between different techniques is impressive. Your grasp of timing over battle technique is rather commendable too. Despite so, the reason why you are unable to achieve victory is because you place too much trust in your battle techniques and overlooked yourself!"

"Place too much trust in my battle techniques?" Unsure of what

the scholarly young man was driving at, Xiao Qin frowned in incomprehension.

"That's right. The aim of a battle technique is to effectively draw out the strength within a cultivator so as to overwhelm the opponent. However, it is important to note that it is a means to a battle, not an end to a battle! As powerful as a battle technique may be, it can only play an auxiliary role in battle." the scholarly young man explained with a smile.

"The battle techniques that you have utilized in your fight against Senior Qiqi and me are indeed powerful. If it had been any other cultivator, there would be no doubt that they would have fallen by now. However, in our eyes, your reliance on powerful battle techniques only became flaws for us to exploit.

"To give you an example, that claw art that you have used against me earlier boasted of incredible speed and astounding might. However, have you considered any countermeasure should your attacks fail to land on your opponent?"

At this point, the scholarly young man paused for a brief moment before continuing. "Even the strongest of battle techniques would be meaningless if you can't land it on your opponent! The reason why I chose to dodge your claw art at the very last moment is because I could tell that you would be wide open in that very instant. In that instant, all of your strength would be centered on your upper body, leaving your lower body wide open!

"Thus, I aimed my kick at your lower thigh. No matter how fast you are able to drive your zhenqi, it would have been difficult for you to channel your zhenqi from your hands to your legs at a moment's notice. You probably thought that this was a negligible flaw due to the incredible speed of your claw art, but under the careful manipulation of an expert, even the smallest of flaws could be exacerbated many times over. That being said, your response is truly commendable. Realizing that you would not be able to reinforce your defenses in time, you decisively chose to switch

your method of offense.

"Your new offense consisted of a light stroking motion. Under its gentle exterior, I could sense sword qi gathering on your fingertips. If I'm not mistaken, it should be a type of battle technique as well. I have to admit that it's quite a powerful move, but its attacks are very straightforward too. A sword might be sharp, but that's only when you are standing before its blade. Just by leaping into the air, I was able to avoid your attack easily. Then, with a simple kick on your fingers, I was able to overcome your battle technique very easily and even inflict considerable damage." the scholarly young man shook his head in pity.

As a whole, the strength of the fellow before him was still decent, but it was a pity that his movements were too rigid.

"Y-you..." Xiao Qin's body trembled in shock, as if a streak of lightning had struck his body.

The other party's analysis was spot-on. Those were indeed the flaws of his battle techniques... It was no wonder why he lost so tragically!

"All of you... were able to see through my flaws as well?" Xiao Qin turned to the crowd around him and asked hoarsely.

"Considering how weak you are, it would have been difficult not to see through your flaws!"

"Your attacks are too straightforward, being able to see through the flaws in it is truly nothing much..."

"To tell you the truth, Hu Chun has only listed a small portion of the flaws in your battle techniques. It goes without saying that the more powerful a battle technique is, the greater damage it could deal, but... if one is unable to land his blows, what would be the use even if one were to wield the most powerful battle technique in the world?"

...

Hearing Xiao Qin's question, a huge commotion broke out amidst the crowd.

"Unable to land his blows..." Xiao Qin muttered in a daze as he heard the comments around him.

Indeed.

Battle techniques were designed to allow a cultivator to amplify his strength so as to deal greater harm to his opponent. However, if one's battle techniques couldn't connect with one's opponent... what would be the use?

No matter how many battle techniques one were to learn, it would only be for show!

"I have benefitted from your guidance..."

The realization of this fact came as an epiphany to Xiao Qin. He had a feeling as if the clouds that had been covering his eyes all along had finally been parted, revealing an entirely new world to him. Thankful, he bowed deeply to the crowd before him.

For many years, he had been aiming to cultivate as many powerful battle techniques as he could, and he took pride in that as well. He mistakenly assumed that powerful battle techniques equalled to greater fighting prowess.

Such a logic may hold true against ordinary cultivators, but when faced with a true expert, his overreliance on battle techniques would have been a fatal flaw!

As the saying goes, 'the greater the breadth, the lower the depth'!

No matter how smooth his transitions between battle techniques were, if he couldn't

"There's no need to stand on ceremony. Actually, we also learned all of these from our principal as well. It's only due to his guidance that we were able to attain the current eye of discernment and astute combat sense that we possess. Otherwise, as ordinary

master teachers, there's no way we could have been a match for you!" the scholarly young man replied.

"Your principal?"

"That's right. Our principal is an incredible genius. Despite being younger than us, his understanding of combat far surpasses our understanding. He is the one who taught us that the precision of an attack is far more important than the strength harnessed in it. For example, in the fight earlier, if you had shifted your first attack to the left by three centimeters and taken an additional step forward, I would have been unable to counterattack at all." the scholarly young man said.

"This..." Frowning, Xiao Qin simulated the scene in his mind, and his eyebrows suddenly shot up in astonishment.

He was right!

If he had done so, the scholarly young man wouldn't have any time to dodge his claws, let more launch an counterattack at his lower body!

"And for the second move, the concept of wielding sword qi on your hands with a gentle stroking motion is a good idea, but your movements are simply too rigid. If you were to complement it with the motions of Gentle Palm as well, you would have been able to cover your sides as well. Even if I had leaped into the sky and dodged your first attack, I would still have been in your attack range, thus forcing the match into a direct collision. If so, it would have been hard to tell whether who would emerge victorious..." the scholarly young man continued analyzing.

Xiao Qin's body stiffened once more.

The main reason why his fingers were kicked so easily earlier was due to the sword qi on his fingers being unable to reach his opponent, thus leaving him wide open.

If he were to complement his stroking motion with the

underlying concept of the Gentle Palm, the enhanced flexibility in his hand movements would have allowed him to cover a greater arc of attack before him. If so, he would have been able to fend against his opponent's kick as well...

"Our principal has once told us that if it would be better to cast away all techniques if all one did was to rely on them blindly. It's only due to your overreliance on battle techniques that resulted in your lack of flexibility in battle, thus placing you in a disadvantage against other cultivators..." the scholarly young man sighed.

With his fists tightly clenched, Xiao Qin finally absorbed everything that he had heard, and he exhaled a mouthful of turbid gas. With admiration in his eyes, he commended, "To be able to have such insights, your principal is truly an incredible genius..."

These combat insights were far more profound than those in the Combat Master Hall. Just by these in itself, it was apparent that the principal that they were speaking about was a terrifying genius.

"Of course, our principal is a genius like no other in the world! Not only so, he also has a magnanimous heart that is boundless like the ocean. As long as one is willing to learn from him, he would impart what he knows without any hesitation." the scholarly young man smiled.

"He would impart what he knows without any hesitation to anyone who is willing to learn?"

"Indeed. But due to his limited time, he has no choice but to limit his efforts on the members of the Xuanxuan Faction for the time being. It is also for this reason that countless cultivators dream of joining our Xuanxuan Faction!" Ruohuan gongzi interjected at this point.

"T-this..."

With his fists tightly clenched, many emotions flashed across

Xiao Qin's face. A moment later, he spoke up meekly, "May I ask if... your Xuanxuan Faction is still recruiting?"

Chapter 1103: The Xuanxuan Faction Has Taken Our Men In!

"You are asking if we are still recruiting?"

Looks of bewilderment filled the faces all around upon hearing that question.

"That's right!" Xiao Qin gritted his teeth in determination. "I wish to join the Xuanxuan Faction as well!"

"This..." Upon hearing those words, everyone's eyes lit up. Ruohuan gongzi burst into laughter and responded, "That's not a problem at all! If our principal were to learn than an outstanding expert like you wishes to join our ranks, he would definitely be delighted as well!"

"So... you are agreeing to it?" Xiao Qin asked nervously.

If there were only one or two strong individuals amongst them, he could still attribute it to their outstanding talent. However, all several thousand members were that powerful, it could only mean that they had an outstanding teacher.

The primary goal of a combat master was to advance their fighting prowess. Only with greater strength would they be able to protect mankind from the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe and other threats.

Considering that the Xuanxuan Faction was willing to impart its knowledge to anyone who was willing to learn, allowing him to attain power swiftly, why should he hesitate in joining its ranks?

"Of course, our Xuanxuan Faction welcomes all kinds of talent!" Ruohuan gongzi chuckled as he flicked his wrist and took out a book. "Here is a manual which contains our compilation of our understanding of the knowledge that our principal has imparted to us thus far. It isn't wholesome, but it does cover many aspects of battle. You can take a look first, it might be just prove to be of help

to you in furthering your strength!"

"This..." Xiao Qin took the book, and upon taking a brief glance at it, his heart suddenly jolted in astonishment.

Even just by looking at the first page, he could tell by his eye of discernment and sharp sense for battle techniques that the content compiled within the book was an unparalleled manual of combat insights.

As long as he were to study it diligently, he would definitely be able to bring his strength up another level.

While he was shocked by the content of the manual, he also couldn't help but feel a little moved.

It was just a moment ago that he requested to join the Xuanxuan Faction, but the other party still chose to hand him such a valuable book to him without the slightest bit of hesitation.

The deep trust that they showed in him left him with an indescribable feeling of warmth within.

"There is only one rule to our Xuanxuan Faction, and that is to obey Principal Zhang Xuan's commands and strive to assist him wherever possible. Other than that, there are no particular boundaries for our Xuanxuan Faction. We promote the sharing of knowledge amongst members without any concealment so that we could grow together as an entire whole." Seeing through Xiao Qin's thoughts, Ruohuan gongzi explained.

From the very start, the Xuanxuan Faction was only a student faction, not an official organization. Furthermore, the primary aim why the organization was founded was to band the freshmen together so that they would be able to protect themselves from the tyranny of the seniors, so the management wasn't particularly strict.

Even though Zhang Xuan had become the principal and their primary aim had already ceased to exist, the culture of free

communication of knowledge and resources had still been preserved.

The more capable members would help to explain difficult concepts to weaker members, and those who were equal in strength would learn from one another and improve together... It was also under such a culture that even the average members of the Xuanxuan Faction were able to advance their cultivation by so much within a short span of several months, such that even a Thousand Men Commander of the Combat Master Hall would be no match for them.

On the other hand, seeing that the Xuanxuan Faction had its ideology based upon the true essence of 'teacherhood', creating a culture of transparency of knowledge regardless of background, Xiao Qin couldn't help but feel deeply impressed.

"I am Xiao Qin, a Thousand Men Commander of the Combat Master Hall. To tell you the truth, I have come here with the intention to assess whether the Xuanxuan Faction is qualified to have an exchange with the Combat Master Hall. However, after taking a look, the Xuanxuan Faction is indeed as amazing as the rumors put it out to be. And its leader, Principal Zhang Xuan, is truly the role model of all master teachers!"

At this point, Xiao Qin's eyes lit up as he continued, "To be honest with you, there are still several hundred combat masters out there awaiting for my news. If it's not too much, I hope to bring them into the Xuanxuan Faction as well!"

He was rather familiar with most of the combat masters who had come to the manor today, and most of them were deeply interested in advancing their fighting prowess. Without a doubt, the Xuanxuan Faction was an ideal platform for them to achieve their goals. If they were to learn of this, they would surely join the Xuanxuan Faction without any hesitation.

"Several hundred combat masters will be joining the Xuanxuan

Faction?"

The crowd couldn't help but be stunned by the news.

"Does the Combat Master Hall permit you to join other organizations?" Ruohuan gongzi couldn't help but ask.

No matter what, the Combat Master Hall could be considered as a military branch of the Master Teacher Pavilion. It didn't seem likely for it to allow its members to join other organizations easily.

"The Combat Master Hall has no particular rules regarding that aspect. Furthermore, considering that the Xuanxuan Faction is a student faction of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, it can be considered as an organization of the Master Teacher Pavilion as well. Thus, there should be no problem in us joining the Xuanxuan Faction!" Xiao Qin replied with a smile.

The rules of the Combat Master Hall were mainly directed towards preventing combat masters from betraying mankind, but considering that the Xuanxuan Faction was an organization of master teachers, it was unlikely that it would cross the bottomline of the Combat Master Hall.

Besides, the Xuanxuan Faction was also a lax organization with few commitments. Even if the hall master were to learn of this matter, it was unlikely that he would say much about it, either.

"Since that's the case, feel free to invite your friends over then... This would also be a good opportunity for our members to learn from you all as well!" Seeing that it wasn't a problem, Ruohuan gongzi nodded.

"Alright!" Xiao Qin quickly left the manor, and not too long later, he returned with two hundred men behind him.

Naturally, it was inevitable that there would be some battles in their first encounter with one another, but considering how even Xiao Qin wasn't a match for the members of the Xuanxuan Faction, less had to be said about the other combat masters.

In less than two hours, the two hundred combat masters had nothing but admiration left for the members of the Xuanxuan Faction. They fought with one another for the opportunity to interact with the members of the Xuanxuan Faction at a deeper level.

The more that they crossed blows and traded insights with the members of the Xuanxuan Faction, the more astounded they were by the level of comprehension that their principal had regarding combat. At the same time, the admiration they felt towards their principal also inevitably deepened as well.

To impart such profound combat insights to the public without any reservations was almost unthinkable! Just what exactly what kind of person was their principal?

The combat masters who had just joined the Xuanxuan Faction couldn't help but be filled with curiosity towards him.

...

The Elder Conference Hall of the Combat Master Hall.

"I have taken a look at the report sent in by Zhuo Qingfeng and Feng Xun, and the fact that Principal Zhang Xuan was able to raise the fighting prowess of ordinary members to match combat masters shows that he's an extraordinary figure. We should pay close note to the students during the exchange, and if there are talented individuals amongst them, try to recruit them into our ranks so as to bolster the forces of our Qingyuan Empire Combat Master Hall!" an elder seated on the main seat of the conference table stroked his beard and said.

The head of the Qingyuan Empire Combat Master Hall, as well as Half-Leaving Aperture realm expert, Xing Zhuoyuan.

While the notion of an exchange with the Master Teacher Academy of a vassal nation sounded ridiculous, it was a motion endorsed by a few Thousand Men Commanders of their Combat

Master Hall. As such, Xing Zhuoyuan was also interested to see whether the little Master Teacher Academy was truly as powerful as everyone put it out to be.

If that was truly the case, he could try to bring in some of their talents into their branch so as to further strengthen themselves.

"Hall Master Xing is indeed wise, our thoughts have been too narrow!"

"With Hall Master Xing's sharp insight, our Qingyuan Empire Combat Master Hall would surely rise to greater heights!"

Upon hearing Xing Zhuoyuan's explanation, the various division heads and elders couldn't help but nod in commendation.

When they first heard that Xing Zhuoyuan had approved to the exchange, they were astounded.

The Combat Master Hall had always been a symbol of strength for the master teachers, an unreachable target for them. Considering how the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy was just a cradle for master teachers in a vassal nation of Qingyuan Empire, it was beneath their Combat Master Hall to hold an exchange with them.

It was only at this moment did they finally comprehend the thoughts which Xing Zhuoyuan had put into this matter.

If one were to describe master teachers as the geniuses amongst the populace, the combat masters would be the geniuses amongst the geniuses. Even within a group of several thousand master teachers, there might not even be a single individual who would be qualified as a combat master.

It was due to the high standards of the Combat Master Hall that there were very few combat masters around. If what Zhuo Qingfeng and the others said were true, and the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy was truly filled with powerful individuals who could subdue cultivators beyond their current cultivation realm, it

would indeed be a good opportunity for them to pull in some fresh blood.

"Right, Hall Master Xing. Even though the exchange is set on three days from now, there are many combat masters who feel indignant at the notion of having to face the students of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy as equals, so they have secretly sneaked off to the accommodations of our guests intending to try out their skills..." At this moment, an elder suddenly recalled a certain matter and reported.

The head of the Martial Arts Division, Division Head Zhen Ying!

Just like the school system of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, the Combat Master Hall was also divided into multiple divisions. All in all, there were a total of ten divisions, namely the Weapon Division, Fist Division, Palm Division, Footwork Division, Martial Arts Division, Internal Breath Division, Guardian Division, Soul Division, as well as the most secretive Heart Division!

Each of these divisions represented a complete heritage, and it served to draw out the full potential of a combat master in a certain aspect.

For example, the Weapon Division could be divided into saber, sword, spear, and the various weapons. Those who were able to join its ranks were mostly combat masters who had grasped Weapon Intent.

On the other hand, the combat masters of the Palm Division specialized in palm arts and wielded incredible strength, and the combat masters of the Footwork Division specialized in movement techniques and possessed outstanding agility.

As for the Soul Division, combat masters would cultivate their souls and learn battle techniques effective against bringing down souls there.

As there was a limit to what an individual could learn, it was

impossible for one to be capable in every single field. As such, the Combat Master hall divided the combat masters into the various divisions based on their proficiency. Through specialization, not only would they be stronger individually, they would also be able to better complement one another in group battles against the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe.

"I have heard of that matter too. Don't worry, just let them be. This will also be a good opportunity to see if the Xuanxuan Faction of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy is truly as capable as Zhuo Qingfeng and the others put them out to be!" Hall Master Xing replied with a chuckle.

Xiao Qin and the others had thought that they had managed to slip out without catching anyone's notice, but considering how more than two hundred combat masters had suddenly vanished from the Combat Master Hall, it didn't take long for the others to catch wind of what they were up to.

In fact, almost every single division head and elder on the conference table was aware of it. However, they chose to left the combat masters to their own devices.

"That's what I thought too, so I allowed them to act as they please. I have already sent someone to scout the situation, so we should receive some news very soon!" Division Head Zhen Ying nodded.

"Seems like all of us have the same intention in mind. We have also sent scouts of our own over, so we should be able to learn whether the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy is the real deal this time around... Good, it seems like the news is in!" Halfway through another division head's words, he suddenly flicked his wrist, and a Communication Jade Token appeared in his hands.

With a smile still lingering on his lips, he lowered his head to take a look, and his face abruptly stiffened.

"What's wrong? Did our combat masters lose in a duel against

them?" Upon noticing the peculiar expression on the division head's face, Hall Master Xing asked.

"News have come in on my side as well. Let me take a look..." Division Head Zhen Ying seemed to have felt something as well, and a Communication Jade Token materialized in his hands. Upon scanning the content, he suddenly froze on the spot as well, unable to speak a word.

"What's going on? Say something!" Taking the reactions of the two division heads into sight, an elder couldn't take it any longer and exclaimed in frustration. Thus, he walked forward and took the Communication Jade Token from Division Head Zhen Ying's hand. However, after taking a look, he froze on the spot too.

It took a very long time before Hall Master Zhen Ying was able to exclaim with a tearful voice, "Hall Master Xing... it seems like before we could even recruit them into our ranks, our combat masters have already been taken in by the Xuanxuan Faction!"

Chapter 1104: Even The Division Heads Have Jumped Ships

"Our combat masters have been taken in by the Xuanxuan Faction?"

"What do you mean?"

The crowd frowned. Even Hall Master Xing had a bewildered look on his face.

"The two hundred combat masters who went to challenge the students of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy have all joined the Xuanxuan Faction..." Division Head Zhen Ying uttered in a daze.

"They have all joined the Xuanxuan Faction?"

Everyone was dumbfounded for a moment before those words could finally be processed in their minds. A stabbing pain struck their chests, leaving them unable to catch their breath.

Hall Master Xing even nearly stumbled and fell out of his chair.

It was just a moment ago that he confidently claimed that the Combat Master Hall would be able to make use of this opportunity to bring in some new blood and bolster their forces. And yet, before they could even manage to poach the other party's students, they ended up losing their men instead...

What the heck was this!

"Preposterous, this is preposterous! A bunch of combat masters actually joined a rural organization... Tell them to return back to the Combat Master Hall this instant, or else I shall have their names erased from the records!" one of the division heads stood up and bellowed furiously.

All along, the Combat Master Hall had always been the one selecting men from other organizations. Never once had anyone

managed to poach their men before.

"But would it be inappropriate for us to do so? Our Combat Master Hall has no rules that prevents our members from joining other organizations, and we don't have the right to restrict them from learning the other occupations, either..." Another division head raised an objection.

While the Combat Master Hall was a little more rigid than the Master Teacher Pavilion, it wasn't governed by too many rules either. Combat masters were still granted a considerable degree of freedom, so to threaten them seemed to be going a little overboard...

"There are no rules in the Combat Master Hall that hinders them from joining other organizations, but if all combat masters were to do so, what would become of our Combat Master Hall? If everyone were to fool around like that, who will stand up to protect mankind when disaster strikes? We need to sever the problem at the root before it gets out of hand!"

"Indeed! There mustn't be a precedent for such a matter, or else, what would become of the pride and dignity of our Combat Master Hall?"

Two of the division heads harrumphed.

The crowd fell silent.

Those words did make some sense.

The Combat Master Hall had no explicit rule that prevented its members from joining other organizations, and all along, there had been no need for there to be such a rule, either. Most combat masters were highly devoted to their training, so very few of them had any time to join other organizations.

However, it was a different matter this time around. Two hundred combat masters were intending to join another organization together, and this could potentially pose to be a

problem. If combat masters were to start segregating themselves by their affiliations, it would affect the camaraderie and morale of the Combat Master Hall.

As such, precedence mustn't be allowed!

If their members were no longer united, how were they supposed to defend mankind from its threats?

There were simply too many empires that had fallen to factional rivalry, and an organization that stood at the frontlines to protect mankind from threats, the Combat Master Hall couldn't afford to risk such a thing happening!

"Alright, I'll inform them right now..." Division Head Zhen Ying hesitated for a moment before nodding. He tapped his finger on the Communication Jade Token and sent a message over.

Weng!

A few moments later, new words emerged on Division Head Zhen Ying's Communication Jade Token, and after browsing through it swiftly, he staggered and nearly fell to the ground.

"What's wrong?"

Taking Division Head Zhen Ying's reaction into sight, the crowd couldn't help but ask anxiously.

The head of the Martial Arts Division had always been as a composed individual, so why did he seem so edgy today?

Just what kind of news was it that would leave him so deeply jolted?

"My subordinate has just relayed the commands to Xiao Qin and the others... and the response he received was that if the Combat Master Hall were to force them to back out from the Xuanxuan Faction, they would rather renounce their identities as combat masters..." With twitching lips, Division Head Zhen Ying revealed the news he had just received.

"They would renounce their identities as combat masters?"

"How is that possible? They have just barely come into contact with the Xuanxuan Faction, and they are already so deeply loyal to them? Just what kind of charm does Zhang Xuan possess for them to act in such a manner?"

A huge commotion broke out within the room. The others didn't take the news any better than Division Head Zhen Ying.

Becoming a combat master was something which countless cultivators dream of every single day. It was an honor, as well as a calling... Those bunch of rascals had only come into contact with the Xuanxuan Faction once, and yet, they were already willing to go to the extent of renouncing their identities as combat masters just to join them?

"Just what kind of spell did that Zhang Xuan cast over them? This won't do... I must teach those arrogant fellows a lesson!" an elder roared furiously as he stood up.

The head of the Fist Division, Chen Zhuqing!

He was the most hot-headed individual amongst the Ten Division Heads, so he was the first to lose his temper upon hearing that his subordinate had been beguiled and poached by a measly little organization from a vassal Tier-1 Empire.

"I'll go with you!" Another elder stood up as well.

The head of the Footwork Division, Lu Wangqiu!

Lu Wangqiu was a good friend of Chen Zhuqing's, and he knew about the latter's fiery temper. Thus, he felt that it would be best for him to tag along so as to defuse the situation if required to.

Besides, even though he was much more rational than Chen Zhuqing, he shared the same thoughts as the latter, so he wanted to see what was going on too.

"If possible, try to avoid any conflicts. Zhang Xuan might only be

the principal of a Tier-1 Master Teacher Academy, but he has close ties with Wu Shi and the others from the Master Teacher Pavilion. More importantly, he's Zheng Yang's teacher... It would suffice to teach him a lesson so that he understands that the Combat Master Hall isn't to be trifled with, there's no need to make this matter bigger than it is!" Hall Master Xing instructed.

As fellow master teachers, there was no need for them to fall out with one another. Such a thing wouldn't benefit either of them.

Not to mention, Zhang Xuan was even the teacher of that incredible genius, Zheng Yang!

Zheng Yang was a rare genius that emerged only once every few millennium, so there was a very good chance that he could clear the examination and become their Progeny of Combat. If that were to happen, as Zheng Yang's teacher, Zhang Xuan's standing would soar beyond measure as well. Thus, it was best to avoid offending him, or else it could turn out bad for them in the future.

While Zhuo Qingfeng and the others had reported Zhang Xuan to be an extraordinary genius as well, the information which the Combat Master Hall had regarding the latter's capability was severely limited as the latter rarely made a move. As such, they didn't think that Zhang Xuan would be more formidable than Zheng Yang.

Even though Zhang Xuan was Zheng Yang's teacher, it didn't necessarily mean that Zhang Xuan would be more talented than Zheng Yang. After all, the main job of a teacher lay in clarifying doubts and guiding the students towards the right path. It wasn't too rare to see students surpassing their teachers.

"Rest assured, Hall Master Xing."

"We know what we to do!"

The two hall masters replied before leaving the room.

Their departure left the room plunging into silence.

At this point, the group was still unable to overcome the fact that the infallible Combat Master Hall was actually outdone by a rural organization... This was something unthinkable to them.

"Actually, this isn't necessarily bad for us. Our Combat Master Hall has been in a lofty position for too long, so this might be a good opportunity to dispel the complacency amongst our members..." Noting the low morale in the room, Hall Master Xing consoled with a smile.

"Un."

The crowd nodded.

Indeed. The Combat Master Hall was too used to being in a higher position than others, and this matter could make their members understand that even the Combat Master Hall wasn't infallible.

"Division Head Chen is a little hot-headed, but with the rational Division Head Lu with him, nothing bad should occur... We should make sure to question those rascals thoroughly when they return so as to find out why they would rather renounce their identities as combat masters just so that they could join the Xuanxuan Faction!"

"There would be nothing for us to say if the combat masters have chosen to stay in the Xuanxuan Faction by its own merit, but if the Xuanxuan Faction has resorted to bribery and beguilement... Hmph, we will have to report it to the Master Teacher Pavilion and have them deal with those black sheeps!"

"To attempt to poach our members, that Zhang Xuan sure is brazen!"

...

The various division heads and elders harrumphed with wintry faces.

While the others were still discussing the matter, Division Head Zhen Ying took out his Communication Jade Token and said, "The

both of them have already arrived at the manor, and they are currently in the midst of communicating with the members of the Xuanxuan Faction..."

Division Head Chen had sent a message over to report their progress.

"Tell Division Head Chen to bring those rascals over here right after he's done. I wish to question them personally to find out what happened!" Hall Master Xing said.

"Alright!" Division Head Zhen Ying nodded as he raised his Communication Jade Token to write on it. In that moment, a burst of light suddenly flashed from his Communication Jade Token, and a line of words surfaced on it.

Division Head Zhen Ying lowered his gaze to take a look at the newly-arrived message, and with just a look, his body stiffened for the third time.

"You... What has happened this time around? It can't be that the other members still refuse to return even though two division heads have headed there personally to pick them up?" Hall Master Xing asked coldly as an air of hostility emanated from him.

For the Xuanxuan Faction to refuse to release their men even when they had already dispatched two of their division heads, weren't they looking down on them a little too much?

"That's not it..." Division Head Zhen Ying quickly shook his head. With utter disbelief and shock reflected in his eyes, he mumbled with quivering lips, "It seems like Division Head Chen and Division Head Lu... have joined the Xuanxuan Faction as well! They said that they won't be returning to the Combat Master Hall for the time being..."

Pu!

"What did you say?"

"The both of them... have joined Xuanxuan Faction as well?"

The crowd was frenzied by what they had just learned.

Those who went to the Xuanxuan Faction to challenge them ended up joining them, and those who went to retrieve their missing members also decided to jump ships... Just what kind of sorcery did the Xuanxuan Faction possess for those who headed there to be unwilling to return?

"Are you certain?" Hall Master Xing's body was trembling uncontrollably. Completely overwhelmed by the situation, he didn't even realize that he had tugged away a huge chunk of his beard.

He knew Division Head Chen and Division Head Lu very well. The both of them would never condone such matters, which was also why the both of them had volunteered themselves to head over there in the first time. So... how in the world did they end up joining the Xuanxuan Faction?

"This..."

The other elders and division heads glanced at one another at a loss.

"Everyone, follow me over to the manor. I want to see with my own eyes just what kind of charm has that Zhang Xuan cast over our combat masters!" After a moment of tense silence, Hall Master Xing rose to his feet and flung his sleeves furiously.

"Yes, Hall Master Xing!"

The others nodded in agreement.

To be honest, they were also perplexed as to why even the two division heads would choose to remain at the Xuanxuan Faction. Was the Xuanxuan Faction really that great?

Leaving the hall, it didn't take long for them to be standing in the aerial space above the manor.

"Look, they are all below..."

Beneath their feet, they spotted Division Head Chen and Division Head Lu standing amidst a huge crowd.

"Who of them is Zhang Xuan?" one of the division heads asked.

"Zhuo Qingfeng has passed a painting of him to me, and it doesn't seem like he's amidst the crowd..." Hall Master Xing shook his head.

He had scanned the entire surroundings with his Spiritual Perception right after he arrived at the area, but there wasn't anyone which fitted Zhang Xuan's description.

The situation was a little bewildering to him. If Zhang Xuan wasn't around, why did the combat masters choose to stay in the Xuanxuan Faction on their own accord?

"Don't head down first. Let's watch what they are up to before we decide on what to do..." Hall Master Xing raised his hand to stop the others from making a move before focusing his senses on perceiving what was happening below.

With his sharpened hearing, he could hear the voice of a male sounding below, "Little Chen, your fist art is actually not too bad. The main reason why you aren't able to defeat me is because your mind is plagued by too many miscellaneous thoughts. Fist art requires one to converge their mind, spirit, and psyche into a single point before bursting forth. In your current state, there's no way you will be a match for me!"

"Little Chen?"

The others also heard those words, and they glanced at one another with twitching lips.

It was one thing for a seventeen-year-old fellow to be talking to Division Head Chen with a lecturing tone, but to call him Little Chen on top of that...

"It'll be easier for you to comprehend it through a demonstration. Alright, suppress your cultivation to Nascent Saint pinnacle for a

moment, I'll give you an example of what a decent punch should be like!" the young man said.

"Alright!" Nodding, Division Head Chen suppressed his cultivation to Nascent Saint pinnacle. After which, he raised his fist, and an incredible aura burst forth from him.

"That is... Division Head Chen's strongest fist art, Ravaging Dragon In the Wild?"

"That young man is going to suffer badly!"

Seeing that Division Head Chen was going to use his famed move, the faces of the combat masters tensed.

Boom!

Two fists collided together, causing a powerful shockwave to ripple in the surroundings.

Sou!

In the next instant, Division Head Chen was sent flying.

"Cough cough. I failed to hold myself back yet again, pardon me..." the young man scratched his head helplessly.

"..." The crowd.

Chapter 1105: Roughly Four Hours

Peng!

Division Head Chen crashed heavily into the wall, causing his body to be covered in dust and dirt. After a series of violent coughing, he got back to his feet and flew back. Even though his face had paled from the injury he had just suffered, there was an inconcealable excited gleam in his eyes.

As the head of the Fist Division, it went without saying that his specialty lay in fist art. With the sheer prowess of his fist, he could easily crush opponents of higher cultivation realm than him.

Yet, despite the young age of the fellow before him, he found that the latter's comprehension of fist art had reached a level far beyond his imagination.

"How can I further improve my fist art?" Division Head Chen clasped his fist and asked earnestly.

'It is not the senior but the skilled that becomes the teacher'. He might be the head of the Fist Division, and the other party might be younger and possess a lower cultivation than him, but it was indubitable that the other party was far beyond him in the field of fist art. It was no shame for him to lower his head and ask for the other party's guidance.

"Your fist art looks decent, but it lacks an indomitable spirit... If I'm not mistaken, you must have cultivated quite a lot of battle techniques, right?" the young man asked.

"That's right. Altogether, I have cultivated 42 fist arts..." Division Head Chen replied awkwardly.

In the past, whenever someone asked him how many fist arts he had learned, he would answer them with a proud look on his face. However, in this moment, he seemed to vaguely understand what the young man was driving at, and he couldn't help but feel a little

embarrassed by it.

"When it comes to battle techniques, one's strength is determined by the mastery of one's technique, not the amount of techniques one have. Learning too many battle techniques may just result in one's mind, spirit, and psyche being divided. Ever since my teacher imparted me my fist art, I have been spending the past year refining that one single move so as to ensure that I have grasped it perfectly. That's also the reason why my fist is able to wield such might. You have learned a total of 42 fist arts, but how much time are you able to devote to each of them?" the young man asked.

"This... I spent roughly twenty years of each of them... I am nine hundred this year..." Division Head Chen scratched his head awkwardly.

"..." Realizing that he had misspoke, the young man's face reddened, and he quickly changed the subject. "Time is not the only factor that matters in the cultivation of fist arts, devotion is very important as well. Alright, since you have joined our Xuanxuan Faciton, I'll impart you a trick as to how you can align your mind, spirit, and psyche together in order to maximize the might of your fist!"

"Thank you!" Division Head Chen's eyes lit up in agitation.

"That youth is actually offering pointers to Division Head Chen?"

"I can still hardly believe it at this point, but... that fist executed by the young man is truly too fearsome. I don't think that we'll be able to withstand it either!"

The division heads and elders in the air were shocked by what they had just seen.

Despite the young age of the person that was teaching Division Head Chen, they had to admit that his fist art was truly powerful. As martial arts fanatics themselves, they couldn't help but feel interested in it.

"It should be out of his desire to learn that fist art that Division Head Chen decided to join the Xuanxuan Faction... But what about Division Head Lu?" After learning of the reason why Division Head Chen had jumped ships, the crowd couldn't help but turn their gazes towards where Division Head Lu was at.

Standing in front of Division Head Lu was a young lady which seemed to be around sixteen or seventeen too. Despite her young age, she had a delicately-shaped face that was extremely beautiful.

The young lady seemed to be saying something to Division Head Lu. Focusing their senses at their conversation, the group could vaguely hear what was being said between the both of them.

"... Little Lu, your movement technique is not too bad, but it's excessively flamboyant. Flamboyant movement techniques can overwhelm the weak, making them err in panic. However, such a trick wouldn't work for experts. One will just appear as nothing more than a fool before their eyes!"

With her hand behind her back, the young lady spoke in a disappointed tone. "The main aim of movement technique is to allow one to close in on an enemy swiftly so as to catch him off guard, thus creating an opportunity to subdue him. Squandering all of one's zhenqi solely on producing illusions will only effectively make one's attack weaker than it should be!

"Lower your cultivation to a realm higher than me, which is Saint 1-dan pinnacle. I'll show you what a movement technique should be like!" the young lady said with a deep sigh.

"Alright!" Division Head Lu nodded before suppressing his aura. In the blink of an eye, his cultivation had been lowered to Saint 1-dan pinnacle.

"Alright, let's begin!"

Right at the start of the battle, Division Head Lu's figure suddenly blurred, and five illusory clones appeared around him. Each of

them felt lifelike, and they emanated the very same aura as one another, making it nigh impossible to figure out which was real and which was fake.

"That's Division Head Lu's [Nine Shadows Step]!"

"Upon mastering the Nine Shadows Step, one is capable of producing nine illusory clones simultaneously, making it an extremely fearsome technique to guard against. Even though Division Head Lu is only able to produce five of them due to his suppressed cultivation, it still wouldn't be easy to deal with that technique!"

"So far, there has been very few people who have managed to overcome the might of the Nine Shadows Step..."

"Even I would have to retreat and reconsider my moves before dealing with that movement technique..."

...

Hall Master Xing and the others watched the situation with grim expressions on their faces.

Saint 1-dan was the minimum cultivation required to execute the Saint low-tier Nine Shadows Step. The movement technique was greatly feared even within the Combat Master Hall itself, such that in a battle under the same cultivation realm, there was none of them who was capable of overcoming it.

"Prepare yourself, I am going to make a move..." While the combat masters were still awed by the sight before them, the young lady suddenly spoke with a solemn voice.

Following which, a figure blurred before everyone's eyes, and it seemed as if a shadow had darted forth. In the next instant, however, the shadow seemed to have returned back to where it was.

Padah!

A resounding echo sounded, and the five illusory clones dissipated. Division Head Lu's body was scrunched together reminiscent of a shrimp, and yellowish bile was spewing in large mouthfuls from him.

Judging from the looks of it, it seemed like the young lady had struck his abdomen.

"She... made a move?" Swallowing a mouthful of saliva, everyone felt their throats running dry.

Even with their eye of discernment, they were unable to see the young lady's movements... Just how fast could she be?

They had never imagined that a day would come where the head of the Footwork Division would have his ultimate skill overcome by another movement technique...

Terrifying!

"Too fast... I am really no match for you. Young Miss, I beseech you to teach me..." After a long moment, Division Head Lu finally recovered from the blow. Struggling back to his feet, he looked at the young lady before him in admiration before clasping his fist earnestly.

When he first heard that the members of the Combat Master Hall would rather join the Xuanxuan Faction than to return, he was extremely furious.

Thus, as soon as he arrived, together with Division Head Chen, they challenged a few of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy students and defeated them all. It was around that moment that Liu Yang, who was currently teaching Division Head Chen at the moment, and Young Miss Wang, who was standing before him at this very moment, came out.

The both of them suppressed their cultivation down to their levels, and yet, to their horror, they were unable to withstand even a single blow from them...

It was then that they realized how powerful the Xuanxuan Faction was, and they couldn't resist the urge of wanting to learn from them as well.

"The aim of a movement technique is fast, faster, and fastest. As long as one's speed is beyond a certain mark, the rest wouldn't be a problem anymore..." the young lady explained.

After listening to her lecture, Division Head Lu couldn't help but feel impressed.

The other party's explanation delved straight into the essence of movement technique, leaving him feeling deeply enlightened. The various notions which had become walls that limited his fighting prowess seemed to have shattered after hearing her words.

To think that despite studying movement technique for several centuries, his comprehension of movement techniques would turn out to be beneath that of a young lady. It was truly a huge embarrassment.

Sighing deeply, Division Head Lu was just about to speak when he suddenly heard Division Head Chen's exclamation not too far away.

"Hall Master Xing, you are here too! Come down, let's join the Xuanxuan Faction together..."

Astonished, Division Head Lu quickly raised his gaze, and it was only then did he notice Hall Master Xing and the other elders and division heads' presence.

As the group had been standing quite a distance away, and the yahd also used their Primordial Spirits to conceal their aura, not even Division Head Lu had noticed their arrival.

"Indeed, come down here and join us. The members of the Xuanxuan Faction truly have an insightful and refreshing perspective towards combat. At the very least, it's far more profound than the knowledge that we impart within the Combat

Master Hall! We should all join the Xuanxuan Faction and further our fighting prowess together!" Division Head Lu shouted with a bright smile.

"This..."

The lips of Hall Master Xing and the others twitched.

They were still planning to observe the situation a little longer and decide on a feasible course of plan before heading down. Yet, those two fellows actually shouted for them like that, betraying their presence... It would be deeply impolite for them to remain hidden under such circumstances, so they could only all get down.

"I am the head of the Combat Master Hall's Weapon Division. May I know who is skilled in weaponry? I can suppress my cultivation and have a fight with you!" Since they were already discovered, there was no need for them to hesitate any longer. The head of the Weapon Division flicked his wrist, and a spear appeared in his grasp. With a slight flick, a sound reminiscent of the call of a dragon echoed in the air.

Knowing that the entire Combat Master Hall might just end up joining the Xuanxuan Faction if they didn't do anything at this point, they were left with no choice but to fight for the sake of their pride and honor!

"Allow me..." the young man who was teaching Division Head Chen stepped forward.

Liu Yang!

While he specialized in fist art, he did learn spear art from Zheng Yang for quite a period of time.

As for the other members of the Xuanxuan Faction, while they would suffice to deal with ordinary combat masters, they were still a little lacking to deal with the division heads.

The previous battle that they had with Division Head Chen and Division Head Lu had already proven the point. It was due to their

successive losses that they ended up inviting them, the direct disciples of Principal Zhang, over.

"Very well!"

Seeing that the other party's cultivation was only at Half-Saint pinnacle, the head of the Weapon Division also suppressed his cultivation to the same level.

Hu la!

Once that was done, he flicked his wrist, and his spear burst forth with incredible momentum.

As expected of the head of the Weapon Division. Even before the spear could reach Liu Yang, the formidable wind pressure that it created as a result of its movement was already hard to withstand.

Even though the head of the Weapon Division had suppressed his cultivation to Half-Saint, the might that he wielded with a spear was still something which not even a Saint 1-dan expert would be able to withstand.

"Incredible..."

"Division Head Zhou's [Charge of the Roaring Dragon] is indeed formidable. As expected of the battle technique which boasts the greatest fighting prowess within the Combat Master Hall! There's probably none in the same cultivation realm who could possibly face it head on!"

"I have fought against him once, and he had used that technique against me. Back then, I could only quickly beguile him with my soul art before quickly making my escape... In a straight encounter, there's no way anyone would be able to withstand it!"

"The same goes for me as well. I could only flee it for the time being and find a way to counterattack..."

...

Hall Master Xing and the others nodded in approval.

As the pride and honor of the Combat Master Hall was at stake here, they couldn't tolerate a loss here. Thus, it was relieving to see that the head of the Weapon Division, Division Head Zhou, resorting to his strongest battle technique right from the start. Even if they were the ones facing that battle technique, they had no confidence to say that they would be able to escape intact from it.

Hu!

While they were still chatting amongst one another, the young man made a move.

The young man raised his spear and pushed it forward with incredible force. It wasn't a particularly exquisite or sharp move, but it pierced through the air in an instant. As a result of its incredibly swift movement, it looked as if the spear had been lengthened in midair, and in the blink of an eye, it appeared right before Division Head Zhou.

Huala!

The might of Division Head Zhou's Charge of the Roaring Dragon dissipated entirely, and the tip of Liu Yang's spear stopped right before Division Head Zhou's throat.

In a single move, Division Head Zhou had been defeated!

"Your spear art is much faster than mine. I have lost..." With a pale face, Division Head Zhou's body froze.

Even though he was the head of the Weapon Division, that move which the young man had utilized previously had already far surpassed his current means. He realized that he was completely helpless before it.

"Your spear art is not too bad. I only defeated you by exploiting an opening in your spear art..." Liu Yang said with a smile.

"I have studied spearmanship for more than 842 years now, and I have always thought that I have already grasped the essence of the

Way of Spear, and there is no peer who would be able to defeat me. Yet, who could have known that there's a mountain higher than the other..."

Shaking his head, Division Head Zhou looked at Liu Yang and asked, "May I know... how long have you been practicing spearmanship?"

"Roughly..." Liu Yang tried to calculate the duration which he had been learning spearmanship for. A moment later, he replied with a serious expression, "... Four hours!"

"..." Pavilion Head Zhou.

Chapter 1106: The Stifled Hall Master Xing

Division Head Zhou cried.

As the head of the Weapon Division, he had dedicated his entire life to studying spearmanship—a whole eight hundred years! Even if the other party only had decades of experience with the spear, he still could have accepted the outcome. After all, everyone had a differing aptitude for spearmanship. There were simply some geniuses in the world who could easily achieve what others spent their entire lives pursuing within just several years.

However, what the young man before him truly specialized in was fist arts! As for spearmanship, the other party had only practiced it for four hours, and yet, he was still defeated that easily.

Seeing the twitching face of the old man before him, as if he was about to faint at any moment, Liu Yang couldn't help but feel a little guilty for traumatizing him. Thus, in hopes of lessening the blow, he quickly added, "This... Actually, I don't remember it clearly anymore. It could have been more than four hours."

Back then, in order to face the Dragon Gate Formation of the Combat Master Hall, he, Wang Ying, and Zheng Yang had imparted their skills to one another unreservedly so that they would have more options to choose from.

Due to the limited time they had, they could only quickly grasp as much as they could. Therefore, Liu Yang had allocated four hours to comprehending the essence of spearmanship.

No... Thinking back, it seemed like it should have been less than four hours... Was it three hours? Or perhaps two?

He had been too engrossed in his training back then, so he could not quite remember it anymore.

Liu Yang frowned.

"Alright..." Seeing how the young man before him was consoling him with a troubled expression on his face, Division Head Zhou could not help but feel deeply stifled in his chest. Blood seemed to well up at the back of his throat, just a little push away from spurting from his mouth.

Seeing that the head of the Weapon Division had been defeated, another elder stepped forward to challenge them. "I am the head of the Palm Division, Yan Qinghai. I would like to challenge you to a duel."

"Palm Division?" Liu Yang frowned. With a nod, he stepped forward and said, "Alright, I'll be your opponent then..."

Wang Ying stepped forward and interjected. "You just had a match, so you should take a rest for now. I'll face him."

Not expecting Wang Ying to vie with him, Liu Yang shook his head. "But Senior, he specializes in palm arts. My fist art is a more compatible match for him compared to your leg art, so it will be better for me to fight him instead!"

"I learned a palm art from Teacher recently, and I haven't found an opponent to practice it with yet. I think this would be a good opportunity for me to give it a try," Wang Ying admitted.

"Teacher also taught me that move too. I want to give it a try as well," Liu Yang replied.

Wang Ying frowned in displeasure. "Well, you just had a match, so you must be exhausted by now. I think it would be good for you to take a rest first. It wouldn't do for you to lose and soil our teacher's reputation."

Liu Yang harrumphed in response. "It's not like you weren't watching the previous round; it was no challenge at all! I didn't even use a thousandth of my zhenqi; that kind of depletion can be recovered within just two breaths! I would have to face a thousand of such opponents to actually be exhausted."

"..." Division Head Zhou.

"..." Division Head Yan.

"..." The crowd from the Combat Master Hall.

The heck!

Can't you all show some respect for your opponents?

We can hear every word you say over here, you know...

No matter what, we are still top-notch experts from the Combat Master Hall. Don't you think it's inappropriate for you to view us with such disdain?

At the very least, you should spare some consideration for our pride and honor.

"Fine fine, you are the senior, so your words count..." After a long argument, Wang Ying finally managed to suppress Liu Yang via her seniority and successfully snatched the right to face the head of the Palm Division, Yan Qinghai.

"Let's start!" With an excited look on her face, Wang Ying stepped up to Division Head Yan Qinghai and said, "I only learned my palm art recently, and I haven't had the chance to try it on anyone yet. I'm not too sure how it'll turn out, so I ask of you to go easy on me."

Hearing the argument between Liu Yang and Wang Ying had left Division Head Yan Qinghai on the verge of erupting. Thus, upon hearing her say such humble words at this moment, he could not help but think that Wang Ying was making fun of him.

"It's too late for you to beg for mercy now!"

With a furious roar, he raised his palm and executed his strongest trump card without any hesitation.

Hong long long!

The palm strike harnessed such incredible force that loud explosions sounded from the compressed air, causing the

surrounding temperature to rise to a fearsome level.

Saint low-tier battle technique, Palm of the Crimson Dragon!

The Palm of the Crimson Dragon was named after the legendary Crimson Dragons, which were known to live within searing lava. It harnessed the energy of pure yang, granting the palm strike the power to melt even steel.

It was due to this technique that Division Head Yan Qinghai had become one of the top experts in the Combat Master Hall.

Hu!

Facing Division Head Yan Qinghai's relentless assault, Wang Ying's first instinct was to dodge with her movement technique, as per her usual strategy. However, recalling that her initial intention, she gritted her teeth and forced herself to remain rooted to the spot. Driving her zhenqi furiously, she executed the palm art that her teacher had imparted to her.

Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm!

According to her teacher's account, it seemed like her teacher had also learned the palm technique not too long ago, and he had not had a chance to use it in battle, either. Nevertheless, based on her understanding of the technique, it seemed like it wielded strength beyond measure.

The two palms collided.

Sou!

"Ahh..." With a cry of agony, Division Head Yan Qinghai's figure was sent retreating into the distance. He swiftly broke the seal on his cultivation and recovered his strength back to its peak, thus allowing him to steady his figure midair. Nevertheless, his face still paled from the previous impact.

"Did you really just learn this palm art? You have never used it in battle before?" Division Head Yan Qinghai asked with a look of

disbelief.

"Indeed. On our way to Qingyuan City, my teacher said that he had recently learned a new palm art, so he imparted it to us and instructed us to practice it well. However, the cultivation of the palm art turned out to be more troublesome than I thought. The practitioner has to build up their emotions in order to draw out the true prowess of the technique, but that can be difficult to pull off in the midst of a battle. So, after cultivating it for a while, I thought that it was rather meaningless, so I never really used it afterwards!" Wang Ying replied.

The greatest flaw in the Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm lay in the necessity to build up one's emotions in order to enter the ideal state of mind to draw forth the strength of the technique. However, despite Wang Ying's strength, she was only a teenager, and limited by her experiences, she was unable to comprehend true sorrow. Thus, after cultivating it for a while, she felt that it was too troublesome and decided to shove it away altogether.

"Meaningless? You decided to seal away such a powerful palm art just like that?" Division Head Yan Qinghai widened his mouth in shock. There was an indescribably stifling sensation in his heart that left him feeling choked up within.

He had only traded one blow with the young lady before him, but with his eye of discernment, he could tell that the palm art she had executed was far stronger than every single battle technique he knew of!

Such a powerful technique, and yet, the young lady said that its cultivation was troublesome and meaningless.

Unable to hold it any longer, Division Head Yan Qinghai took in a deep breath and, with a reddened face, asked hesitantly, "Can you... impart this palm art to me?"

"Of course! Our teacher is a magnanimous person, and he would never hesitate to teach those who are willing to learn. If you truly

wish to learn the palm art, I can impart it to you right now..."

Wang Ying had never learned such a troublesome battle technique ever since she started cultivating. Not only did it require her to align her mind, spirit, and psyche, she even had to build up her emotions and immerse herself within it during its execution. That was too troublesome!

In her view, such a troublesome technique probably wouldn't be too powerful or practical in combat. Thus, there was no harm imparting it to the other party.

"Y-you are really... willing to impart it to me?" Division Head Yan Qinghai widened his eyes in shock. A moment later, he took in a deep breath, assumed a grave expression, and declared, "From now on, I am a member of the Xuanxuan Faction as well. Anyone who tries to advise me to leave here shall be my sworn enemy!"

"..." Hall Master Xing.

"..." The other division heads.

There was a long silence drifting in the air before another elder finally stepped forward.

"I am Division Head Wu of the Footwork Division. Is there anyone who is willing to face..."

However, before Division Head Wu could finish his words, Hall Master Xing stepped forward and said, "Enough. I see that our two friends over here are already exhausted from all the fighting they have done, so let's call it a day."

"Hall Master Xing..." There was a hint of anxiety in Division Head Wu's words.

Aren't we here to cause trouble?

How can we give up right now?

"Cough cough. Division Head Wu, let's just call it a day. In any case, those from the Xuanxuan Faction will stay here for a couple

of days, so we have more than sufficient time to exchange insights with them," Hall Master Xing replied.

At this rate, he might very well find all of his division heads becoming members of the Xuanxuan Faction! How humiliating it would be for him if that happened!

After a long moment of silence, Division Head Wu could only sigh deeply and reluctantly give up on the idea. "Alright then..."

The battle techniques that the two youths had utilized were simply too astounding. Even he could not help but feel tempted to learn them as well. However, the look on Hall Master Xing's face clearly showed that he would go into a frenzy if another division head jumped ship to the Xuanxuan Faction. It seemed like he would just have to sneak back here later in the night.

After holding back the tempted division heads for the time being, Hall Master Xing turned to Liu Yang and Wang Ying and asked with a smile, "These two friends over here, may I know where Principal Zhang currently is?"

"Our teacher went out early in the morning, and he hasn't come back yet," Wang Ying replied.

"He hasn't come back yet?" Hall Master Xing nodded. "I see. Tell him that I'll be paying a visit soon to discuss the details of the exchange."

"Alright, I'll relay your words to him." Wang Ying nodded.

"Un. We'll be taking our leave now."

After saying those words, Hall Master Xing left with the manor with the few remaining division heads and elders without any hesitation.

He rushed all the way back to the Combat Master Hall, and it did not take long for him to return to the Elder Conference Hall.

Everyone took their seat, and a queer silence permeated the air.

In this trip, not only had they failed to bring back their combat masters from the Xuanxuan Faction, they had even lost two more division heads. With this, only six was left of the initial Ten Division Heads. To make matters worse, there was an excited gleam within the eyes of several division heads, which hinted that they might defect very soon.

To think that his initial thought was to draw in fresh talents from the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy into the Combat Master Hall during the exchange. Yet, before he could draw in a single person, the other organization had already taken in so many of their men.

The more Hall Master Xing thought about the matter, the more stifled he felt.

After the silence lingered long enough, Hall Master Xing took a look at the faces before him and asked, "What are your views on the matter today?"

"This... The Xuanxuan Faction is indeed extraordinary in its own way. If I'm not mistaken, those two youths who faced Division Head Yan and Division Head Zhou should be Principal Zhang's direct disciples. The battle techniques that they executed were truly impressive!"

"Indeed, indeed! This is my first time seeing someone overcoming Division Head Chen's fist art with sheer force! That young man's spear art is also very impressive as well, I never could have imagined that Division Head would be defeated in a single move!"

"To be honest, the palm art executed by the young lady is the most profound and powerful battle technique I have seen. That palm strike that she executed wasn't just powerful, it gave me a feeling that I was sinking deep into the crevices of space, preventing me from dodging the attack..."

...

The several division heads and elders in the room discussed excitedly.

"Cough cough!" Hall Master Xing clutched his aching chest in despair.

He was asking them to offer suggestions to resolve the current quandary they were in, but... those faces filled with admiration and excitement... What the heck?

Was the heritage of their Combat Master Hall really beneath that of a mere Master Teacher Academy?

"Enough! This meeting is adjourned!" Knowing that the division heads and elders were still overwhelmed by the battle techniques they had witnessed at the Xuanxuan Faction, he realized that they were in no state to be discussing the matter, so he waved his hand and sighed deeply.

"Yes!"

The division heads and elders rose from their seats and bowed deeply to him before backing out of the room.

Soon, silence returned to the room. At this moment, only Hall Master Xing and an elder were left.

The elder was the head of the mysterious Heart Division of the Combat Master Hall, Liao Bujin.

"What is your view of the matter?" Hall Master Xing asked.

"Hall Master Xing, I don't think that this is necessarily bad news for our Combat Master Hall!" Division Head Liao replied.

"You think that this matter could be beneficial for us?" Hall Master Xing frowned.

Why did he feel so skeptical at those words?

"Undeniably, the members of the Xuanxuan Faction possess a terrifying comprehension of combat. It is inevitable that our combat masters, who seek to advance their fighting prowess, have

been seduced by their strength. However, as much as it is a threat, this is also a good opportunity for us as well. If we could absorb the Xuanxuan Faction into our Combat Master Hall, it will only be a matter of time before we are able to surpass the Combat Master Halls of other Conferred Empires!" Division Head Liao said.

"This... I also get the logic, but judging from the current circumstances surrounding the Xuanxuan Faction, will they be willing to join the Combat Master Hall?" Hall Master Xing shook his head dejectedly.

"Actually, that isn't a difficult problem to resolve. From what I can see, they are deeply loyal to Principal Zhang. Thus, if we can convince Principal Zhang to join the Combat Master Hall, I don't think that we will have any trouble absorbing the Xuanxuan Faction as well!" Division Head Liao said with a smile.

"This..." Hall Master Xing was stunned for a moment before slowly nodding.

What Division Head Liao said was indeed true. If they could convince Zhang Xuan to join the Combat Master Hall, they would be able to turn the threat of the Xuanxuan Faction into a blessing instead, and their forces would become stronger than ever!

But...

Bringing Principal Zhang into the Combat Master Hall did not seem like an easy feat!

"Hall Master Xing, with your current Half-Leaving Aperture realm cultivation, if you could just find a powerful spirit awakener to nourish your soul and make it even more wholesome, you might just be able to clear the Trial of Inner Demons of the Heart Division and obtain that secret art," Division Head Liao said with a sharp glint in his eyes.

"By then, no one at the same cultivation realm will be a match for you! With that, you can challenge Principal Zhang to a duel with

him joining the Combat Master Hall as the stake... If it works out, it will just be a matter of time before our Combat Master Hall rises to glory!"

Chapter 1107: Cang Xu

"The highest secret art of the Heart Division is a technique left behind by the founder of the Qingyuan Combat Master Hall. Of the many generations of hall masters, only five have succeeded in clearing the Trial of Inner Demons to acquire the technique." Hall Master Xing frowned. "It won't be easy..."

Division Head Liao was right. If he could master the greatest secret art of the Heart Division, he would be peerless in his class. No matter how powerful those from the Xuanxuan Faction were, they would still be no match for him.

The Heart Division was the most mysterious division of the Combat Master Hall. Instead of cultivating their body, soul, or battle techniques, their main focus lay in cultivating their heart and overcoming the fearsome Inner Demons within them. If one could clear the Trial of Inner Demons, they would be able to acquire the greatest secret art left behind by their founder, thus making one peerless in one's class.

Of course, Hall Master Xing had considered taking the trial before, but each time, he had ended up shying away out of fear. The trial was simply too difficult, such that only the greatest of geniuses among the preceding hall masters had succeeded in clearing it.

"I know that it won't be easy, but... we don't have any other choice! Judging from the state of the remaining division heads, most of them will probably end up joining the Xuanxuan Faction as well. If that happens, we will become nothing more than an empty shell, and the Qingyuan Empire Combat Master Hall will become a joke in everyone's eyes!" Division Head Liao said bitterly.

He also knew that it would be nigh impossible to accomplish it, but they were already cornered. At this point, they did not have any other choice.

Hall Master Xing sighed deeply.

He knew that at this rate, it would only be a matter of time before their Combat Master Hall effectively became a subsidiary of the Xuanxuan Faction.

With his influence, he was still able to suppress the news for the time being. However, as the saying goes, paper cannot hope to contain fire.

It was only a matter of time before the news was leaked and became known to the public. For the great Combat Master Hall to become a subordinate organization of a student faction of a Tier-1 Empire... He would never be able to raise his head in public anymore!

The inept Hall Master Xing would become a laughingstock in all other Combat Master Halls!

More importantly, the Convention of Combat Masters among Conferred Empires was just around the corner... Nothing could be allowed to happen at this critical period!

"Hall Master Xing, we are already standing right at the cliff. We have no choice but to give it a try," Division Head Liao persuaded.

Taking a deep breath, Hall Master Xing nodded grimly. "You're right. No matter what, I'll have to give it a try."

The situation at the Combat Master Hall was not too optimistic. The Trial of Inner Demons was dangerous, but at the very least, it was not fatal. Currently, this was the best shot they had.

"Guild Leader Ruan and Vice Guild Leader Chen of the Spirit Awakener Guild are my friends, so I can bring you to them. As long as they assist us, your Primordial Spirit will be able to become more wholesome, and clearing the Trial of Inner Demons shouldn't be too difficult!" Division Head Liao said.

"I'll be troubling you then, Division Head Liao!" Hall Master Xing nodded in gratitude.

Although spirit awakener was only a supporting occupation, their expertise in the field of Primordial Spirits and souls were indeed valuable to cultivators. With their help, his Primordial Spirit could be made more wholesome, thus making his mind more focused. With that, he would be less vulnerable to the beguilement of the Inner Demons.

There were also many Half-Leaving Aperture realm experts who would engage the help of spirit awakeners so that their minds would not be crushed by the excruciating pain of the lightning tempering their soul during the Leaving Aperture Ordeal.

Based on the statistics compiled by the Combat Master Hall, the probability of Half-Leaving Aperture realm cultivators clearing the Leaving Aperture Ordeal was only 10%, but with the help of a spirit awakeners, the probability could be raised to 30%!

It was for this reason that spirit awakeners were so highly sought after, the demand highly exceeding the supply.

In fact, despite not being classified as a unique occupation, the Spirit Awakener Guild's main headquarters held a prestigious standing in the Master Teacher Continent. The influence it wielded was on par with even the stronger Sage Clans.

After all, the stronger one became, the heavier one's Inner Demons would become. The ability of spirit awakeners in tempering the soul and making it more wholesome in itself made them an organization that most powers wanted to befriend.

It was said that there were at least six powerhouses in the continent who had declared that anyone who became an enemy of the Spirit Awakener Guild would have to face them as well. Not only so, there were also many experts in the Master Teacher Pavilion's main headquarters who had specially joined the Spirit Awakener Guild to learn spirit enchantment as well, thus furthering the Spirit Awakener Guild's sphere of influence.

It was for this reason that despite the relatively weak fighting

prowess of the occupation, not even the Combat Master Hall dared offend them.

"Alright, let's go!" Division Head Liao nodded.

Having made up their minds, the duo stepped out of the Elder Conference Hall and flew straight for the Spirit Awakener Guild.

...

In the Spirit Awakener Guild, Zhang Xuan followed behind Guild Leader Ruan and the others with a sheepish look on his face, and soon, they arrived in a spacious room.

After taking their seats, Guild Leader Ruan turned to Zhang Xuan and asked, "May I know how I can address you?"

Zhang Xuan had not introduced himself to anyone in the Spirit Awakener Guild, so not even Vice Guild Leader Xu knew of his name.

"I am Zhang..." Zhang Xuan was just about to say his name when he paused for a brief moment. Then, with a refreshing smile, he continued, "Cough cough, I am Sun Qiang!"

Considering how he had caused so much trouble here, bringing the other party's guild building to life, it would be best if he did not reveal his name. Otherwise, if they were to raise their complaints with the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, how would he ever be able to raise his head before the students again?

"So, you're Sun gongzi!" Guild Leader Ruan pondered for a moment, but there was not a person she knew of in the Combat Master Hall who fit the criteria. Perplexed, she asked, "Sun gongzi, you aren't from our Qingyuan City, right?"

"That's right. I just arrived in Qingyuan City not too long ago," Zhang Xuan replied with a nod.

"I see!" Guild Leader Ruan also nodded. "Back to the topic at hand, the reason we invited gongzi over is because we have

something that we require your help on. You have enchanted our guild building and brought it to life. In light of that, we hope that... you can tame it and pass over its ownership to us, or else... you can just join our Spirit Awakener Guild and become one of us!"

"Join the Spirit Awakener Guild?" Zhang Xuan shook his head. "I am a master teacher, so I'm afraid that it would be inappropriate for me to join other guilds. I'll help you tame the guild building instead. However... I am not too sure how I can go about doing it, so I'll need you to guide me along."

It was really an accident that he had enchanted the entire guild building!

How could he have known that the black pillar was part of the supporting structure of the building? It was at the same spot as where the examination puppets were on the previous floors, so he had thought that it was part of the examination as well. Who would have thought that the entire guild building would come to life instead?

Hearing the young man turn down her invitation, Guild Leader Ruan could only shake her head in disappointment. "Actually, it isn't too difficult. Sun shi, you just have to draw out the awakened spirit of the guild building and have it contract with me!"

To be honest, the other party's ability to successfully enchant the entire guild building without going through proper training showed that he possessed unparalleled aptitude for spirit enchantment!

It was a real pity that the other party was a master teacher, not to mention, a male!

Otherwise, she would have surely recommended him to the main headquarters!

Even though the Spirit Awakener Guild had men, they were in the minority. The entire lineage, and that was including their

founder as well, was dominated by females. No matter how talented a man was within their guild, it would be hard for him to enter the top echelon.

"I see." Zhang Xuan nodded. "That shouldn't be a problem at all."

Just as the other party had said earlier, the guild building possessed deep loyalty to him as he was the one who had awakened its spirit. As long as he commanded it so, its spirit should be willing to contract with Guild Leader Ruan.

"I'll be troubling Sun shi then!" Guild Leader Ruan replied with a smile. "Let's do it outside. The sealing of the contract requires both parties to face one another, so it would be impossible to do it in here."

The sealing of the contract required the spirit of the guild building to offer a portion of its spirit to her, and their location was not suited for it, considering that they were currently in the 'stomach' of the guild building.

Thus, the four of them flew out of the room and gazed at the guild building face-to-face in midair.

Due to the movements of the guild building after it came to life, huge cracks had emerged on the tidy streets, and the civilians in the area had long evacuated as far as they could, leaving behind only a few dozen relatively powerful spectators in the vicinity.

Their gazes were centered on the guild building as well, seemingly intrigued by how such a huge building had suddenly come to life.

Noting that the three guild leader and vice guild leaders were standing behind him, Zhang Xuan said sheepishly, "Let me try communicating with its spirit."

He turned his gaze toward the building, and using his means as a spirit awakener, he tried to establish contact with the spirit within it.

Huala!

Seemingly having heard Zhang Xuan's calling, the building shook slightly as it raised its head once more.

Seeing that it was possible to communicate with the building, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. He began discussing the matter of having it contract with Guild Leader Ruan.

While Zhang Xuan was in the midst of communicating with the building, hidden in an alley not too far away from the Spirit Awakener Guild, a white-haired elder was glaring at him with hateful eyes.

"That is the man who injured you?"

Standing beside that white-haired elder was another old man. The old man had a moustache shaped like the '八' character, his eyes were slanted diagonally, and there was a crimson scar on his glabella that was eerily reminiscent of a closed eye.

"Yes, that's him! You must kill him and have his corpse torn to shreds, or else I'll never be able to quell the anger in my heart!" the white-haired elder spat with tightly gritted teeth.

He was the Flitting Earth Bandit of the Northern Meadows, Dao Kou!

He had been knocked out by Zhang Xuan's punch previously, and after regaining consciousness, he had found himself unable to forgive that arrogant young man. Thus, he had gone to seek out the old man beside him and brought him over.

Naturally, the old man was the other member of the Twin Bandits, Sky Bearing Bandit Cang Xu!

Cang Xu was a Saint 4-dan Primordial Spirit realm pinnacle expert, and it was due to his overwhelming strength that the Twin Bandits enjoyed such great fame in the Northern Meadows.

"Don't worry. No matter who he is, I will have his soul crushed

for daring to hurt my brother!" Cang Xu harrumphed coldly. "However, based on what you said earlier, it seems like that person is a master teacher. His Saint 1-dan cultivation isn't a threat at all, but the Master Teacher Pavilion will come after us if it is found that we have killed a master teacher!"

The Master Teacher Pavilion was not a power to be trifled with.

Even for just a 4-star master teacher, one could only report him to the Master Teacher Pavilion and have them deal with him. If one were found to have harmed a master teacher of their own accord, they would be severely punished for their actions!

Once the Master Teacher Pavilion made a move, there was no one in the continent who could get away unscathed, let alone the both of them!

Dao Kou harrumphed. "So what if he's a master teacher? As long as you use your secret art, you should be able to get rid of him discreetly. The Master Teacher Pavilion will never be able to link his death to you!"

"You shouldn't underestimate the prowess of the Master Teacher Pavilion. If they really try to investigate the matter, they will surely be able to uncover the truth. However... a mere Saint 1-dan small fry won't be worthy of them putting much effort into the matter!" Cang Xu sneered.

As long as the Master Teacher Pavilion put its mind to it, it would be able to uncover the truth of even the most discreet of murders. However, the time, manpower, and resources that would have to be spent on it would be extremely great as well.

Even if it was through a surprise attack, the fact that the young man had been able to knock out Dao Kou in a single punch hinted that his standing in the Master Teacher Pavilion should not have been too low. But that still would not be sufficient to justify the Master Teacher Pavilion paying such a heavy price to investigate his death!

"As you know, I was only barely able to learn the secret art with the guidance of an elder. I cannot afford to be interrupted in the midst of the technique, or else I will suffer a severe rebound. I will need you to protect me later on while I try to snatch his soul," Cang Xu said.

His secret art was, in fact, a soul art that he had found in an ancient domain. It was capable of killing another discreetly, making it extremely difficult to guard against.

It was through such means that they were able to dominate the Northern Meadows, with none daring to get on their bad side.

Dao Kou nodded. "Don't worry, I'll guard you!"

"Un." Cang Xu nodded back. "The secret art only works when I am in within three hundred meters of the target. We will have to find a quiet spot a little closer to the Spirit Awakener Guild."

Chapter 1108: Pummeling the Guild

As fearsome as the secret art was, it had its limits, too. It was best to execute it within a distance of three hundred meters so as to ensure its effectiveness.

As Primordial Spirit realm experts, they were able to conceal their aura and hide their presence easily. In the blink of an eye, they had already made their way over to another alley not too far away from the Spirit Awakener Guild without catching anyone's attention.

After swiftly assessing the distance, Cang Xu noted that it was precisely three hundred meters, and he heaved a sigh of relief. He looked at Zhang Xuan in the sky with narrowed eyes as he said menacingly, "Let's do it here!"

"Alright!" Dao Kou nodded as he warily scanned the surroundings.

Cang Xu would be in a vulnerable state while he was executing the secret art. He would not be able to move, so someone had to protect him during that period.

As Cang Xu took a seat on the ground, he drove his zhenqi furiously. Blood suddenly began seeping from the crimson scar on his glabella, producing a hair-raising sight.

Tzzzzzzzz!

A sinister killing intent slowly drifted from his glabella. Something that was reminiscent of a Primordial Spirit floated above his head, and it slowly morphed into the shape of a mini altar.

The mini altar had a peculiar form unlike any other. If Zhang Xuan had witnessed this scene, he would have immediately recognized the altar as identical to the one that he had snatched from the Jadeleaf King, except for the fact that it was much

smaller.

Upon seeing the appearance of the altar, Dao Kou heaved a sigh of relief.

As mystical as his brother's secret art sounded, it was rather simple in theory. It involved using the cultivator's Primordial Spirit as a medium to draw in the target's soul. Once this happened, the target, being deprived of their soul, would die unknowingly. It was troublesome to execute, but its value lay in how discreet it was. Even a 7-star pinnacle master teacher might not notice the attack even if it was happening right before his eyes!

Weng!

As Cang Xu drove his zhenqi, light shone from the altar, and a bizarre-looking figure emerged from it. The bizarre-looking figure made some peculiar movements similar to an awkward tribal dance to summon Zhang Xuan's soul.

Soft mutterings reminiscent of dream talk echoed in the air as a slight glow radiated from the altar. The slight glow, invisible to the eyes of others, slowly crept up and gathered around Zhang Xuan's body, shrouding him entirely in it.

Got him!

Sensing that the other party's soul was within his grasp, Cang Xu smiled in excitement. He quickly used his Primordial Spirit to drag Zhang Xuan's soul toward the altar.

How can it be so heavy?

A tug, and Cang Xu knew that something was amiss. For some reason, the other party's soul felt as heavy as a mountain. Despite his tug, it was not budging in the least!

In this moment, he felt like a cricket trying to fell a tree.

Cang Xu was perplexed. What is going on?

With his strength as a Primordial Spirit pinnacle cultivator, even

if he assaulted an expert of the same cultivation realm as him, he would still be able to easily drag the other party's soul toward him. Yet, how could the soul of that Saint 1-dan young man possibly be so heavy?

I don't believe that I won't be able to pull him over.

Narrowing his eyes, Cang Xu harrumphed coldly within as he tugged with even greater force.

...

While Cang Xu was straining himself over there, Zhang Xuan was currently communicating with the spirit of the guild building.

"Be a good boy and seal the contract with that nice auntie over there..." Zhang Xuan communicated his thoughts over to the spirit of the guild building.

Hualala!

Upon hearing those words, the spirit of the guild building suddenly rippled anxiously, seemingly expressing its opposition to the notion.

It was the young man before it who had awoken its spirit, so naturally, it was only willing to submit to him. It was deeply reluctant to be contracted to another being other than him.

"Hmm?"

Just as Zhang Xuan was about to continue persuading the spirit of the guild building, he suddenly felt a light yank on his soul. The sensation... felt a little similar to being bitten by a mosquito or being tugged by a little child. He instinctively retaliated by pulling back on whatever was tugging on his soul, but before he could process what it was, the guild building before him suddenly leaped up furiously.

Puhe!

Due to the sheer size of the guild building, it was able to cover

several hundred meters within a single leap. A resounding squish sounded beneath where it landed, and following shortly after was a shriek of agony similar to the sound of a pig being butchered.

" Brother! "

For some reason, Zhang Xuan found that shriek peculiarly familiar. Lowering his gaze, he saw Dao Kou, the man whom he had sent flying some time before, staring at the ground before him with a look of horror.

And in front of him, an old man was crushed into a meat patty under the sheer weight of the guild building.

While conducting the soul attack on Zhang Xuan, Cang Xu had been unable to move his body at all. Despite all the precautions he had prepared beforehand, he had never thought that the massive guild building would be able to move so energetically, and he ended up being crushed to death before he could even react.

No one would have thought that the Sky Bearing Bandit Cang Xu, who had the entire Northern Meadows trembling in fear at his name, would end up dying at the hands of a building.

"It really ended up trampling someone to death..." Zhang Xuan's lips twitched as he watched his worst nightmare come to be.

Previously, he had been thinking that if the guild building ran amok, someone would eventually be hurt. To think that it actually happened...

Looking downward at the crying Dao Kou, he could not help but feel deeply apologetically.

It was just a moment ago that he had beaten the other party up, and now, the guild building that he had awoken ended up crushing the other party's brother into a lump of meat. This fellow sure was unlucky!

Swiftly flying downward, Zhang Xuan sighed deeply and said, "My condolences. Rest assured, I'll teach this guild building a

lesson!"

"You bastard, I'll kill you!"

However, for some reason, Dao Kou only seemed to become even more incensed upon hearing Zhang Xuan's consolation. With eyes reddened in anger, he roared furiously and charged forward.

In his view, Zhang Xuan was the culprit who severely injured him and killed his brother, and his words appeared to be mocking him. Hatred clouded his mind, and he felt as if he would never be able to vent his anger unless he ripped the bastard in front of him into pieces.

Boom!

Before Dao Kou reached Zhang Xuan, an intense gust of wind tore through the area, and in the next moment, a massive figure suddenly came crashing down.

Paji!

Crushed under the guild, Dao Kou was flattened like a pancake, just like Cang Xu.

"You..." Zhang Xuan's eyebrows shot up in fury.

Building, you are too much!

How can you blatantly murder others right before my eyes? Do you think I'm blind? Unforgivable!

Angered, Zhang Xuan flew up to face the guild building before raising his palm.

Hong long!

A massive palm print formed of zhenqi gathered before him before bursting forth toward the guild building.

In face of Zhang Xuan's wrath, the guild building whimpered indignantly, not daring to move in the slightest.

...

Hu hu!

Hall Master Xing and Division Head Liao were making their way over to the Spirit Awakener Guild.

While travelling, Division Head Liao had sent a message over to his acquaintances at the Spirit Awakener Guild through a Communication Jade Token.

After reading the message that had just appeared on his Communication Jade Token, Division Head Liao informed Hall Master Xing with a troubled frown, "Guild Leader Ruan is currently in the guild, but... it seems like she's currently preoccupied with some matters at the moment. She might not be free to enchant your Primordial Spirit."

It was a necessary formality for the head of the Combat Master Hall to send a notice before visiting the Spirit Awakener Guild. Otherwise, if there was no one there to receive him, it would not look good on Hall Master Xing's part either.

"Preoccupied?" Hall Master Xing frowned. "Tell her that I'm willing to pay any price as long as she agrees to help me!"

The matter concerning the Xuanxuan Faction was extremely urgent. He had to resolve it as soon as possible, or he would be risking the utter disgrace of the Combat Master Hall. In order to prevent that, Hall Master Xing was willing to pay any price he needed to.

"Alright, I'll relay your words to her!" Division Head Liao swiped his finger on the Communication Jade Token, and a moment later, he frowned. "She says that... she really has urgent matters to attend to, and she won't be able help you today!"

"What about the other two vice guild heads?" Hall Master Xing asked.

"It seems like they are also with her," Division Guild Liao replied.

"With her? What in the world are they up to?" Hall Master Xing

flung his sleeves. "Tell them that our Combat Master Hall is willing to settle any problem they are facing as long as they are willing to nourish my Primordial Spirit!"

"Alright, I'll try asking..." Knowing that this matter was of grave importance, Division Head Liao nodded and sent another message. A moment later, the Communication Jade Token in his palm glowed, and a line of words emerged.

Upon seeing what was written on it, Division Head Liao's body stiffened, and he nearly fell from the sky.

Hall Master Xing frowned. "What's wrong?"

"They said... They said..." the usually-composed Division Head Liao stuttered.

"They said that they are currently in the midst of watching someone pummel their guild!"

Chapter 1109: Huge Trouble

Hall Master Xing was stunned. For a moment, he thought that he had misheard.

"What did you say? Pummel what?"

Division Head Liao took another look at the words on his Communication Jade Token, and he replied with an indescribable expression on his face, "Pummel their guild..."

"Guild? What guild?" Hall Master Xing widened his eyes in bewilderment. "Did Guild Leader Ruan offend some other guild?"

"That's not it. They are watching someone pummel their own guild... It seems like someone has succeeded in enchanting the Spirit Awakener Guild's building, and the building has come to life!" Division Head Liao explained.

"Someone enchanted the Spirit Awakener Guild's building?" Hall Master Xing's lower jaw nearly fell to the ground.

Even though he was not a spirit awakener, he also understood that the larger an object was, the harder it would be to enchant it. Considering how large the guild building was, it was bound to be far more difficult to enchant it compared to normal artifacts. For someone to actually successfully enchant it... just which incredible spirit awakener could it be?

"It seems to be the deed of a foreign spirit awakener who goes by the name of Sun Qiang," said Division Head Liao.

"Sun Qiang?" Hall Master Xing frowned.

Not knowing much about the Spirit Awakener Guild, the name did not ring a bell to him.

A thought suddenly flashed through Hall Master Xing's mind, and he spoke with an excited gleam in his eyes. "Right! If that Sun Qiang person is able to enchant even the entire guild building, he

will surely be more than capable of nourishing and stabilizing my Primordial Spirit, right?"

"You're right!" Division Head Liao nodded in agreement.

He knew full well that even with Guild Leader Ruan and the other vice guild leaders' proficiency in spirit enchantment, they were still incapable of enchanting something as large as the guild building. Given that Sun Qiang was able to do it, it could only mean that his proficiency in spirit enchantment was far greater than theirs.

If they could acquire his assistance, perhaps Hall Master Xing would really be able to clear the Trial of Inner Demons and obtain the heritage, thus resolving the crisis they were in!

"Let's head over to take a look!" Agitated, the duo hastened their footsteps.

It did not take too long for them to arrive at the Spirit Awakener Guild. There, they saw a young man wagging his finger furiously at the massive building while bellowing angrily.

Meanwhile, the guild building's long neck was lowered miserably. From time to time, it would nick the young man's robe, seemingly trying to appease him.

"This..."

Even though they had heard that someone had successfully enchanted the Spirit Awakener Guild's building, it was still shocking to see it with their own eyes.

Such a huge building was moving its body ceaselessly, and the paint and dust on it were tearing off layer after layer, causing a cloak of dust to rise in the area. It was a truly fantastical sight.

More importantly... that massive figure was actually fawning over the young man, trying its best to express its goodwill toward him. Hall Master Xing and Division Head Liao could not help but feel as if their perception of the world had just collapsed

altogether.

"Guild Leader Ruan, Vice Guild Leader Chen, Vice Guild Leader Xu!" Stepping forward, Division Head Liao greeted the three ladies as he introduced his companion. "This is the head of the Combat Master Hall, Hall Master Xing!"

"It's pleasure to meet you. I have long heard of your name..."

The three top brass of the Spirit Awakener Guild quickly greeted Hall Master Xing politely.

"Pardon me. As fellow residents of Qingyuan City, I should have come over long ago to greet you all." After trading a few pleasantries, Hall Master Xing turned his gaze toward the young man before the guild building and remarked, "I don't think that I have seen Spirit Awakener Sun Qiang around before..."

"He has just arrived at Qingyuan City not too long ago, and his proficiency of spirit enchantment is one that leaves even me deeply impressed. Hall Master Xing, if you truly hope to have your Primordial Spirit enchanted, it would be best for you to seek his assistance!" Guild Leader Ruan replied.

Honestly speaking, the cultivation of Hall Master Xing was a little too high for her spirit enchantment to work well on his Primordial Spirit.

"I'll have to trouble Guild Leader Ruan to introduce me to him then." Hall Master Xing quickly bowed.

"I also only just got to know him a while ago, so I'm afraid that there's nothing I can do if he refuses to help," Guild Leader Ruan said.

At this moment, Division Head Liao could not help but ask, "Guild Leader Ruan, if I may just ask, why is Spirit Awakener Sun Qiang beating up the guild building all of a sudden?"

This matter had left him deeply perplexed.

Since the other party had successfully enchanted the guild building, why was he pummeling it now?

"As the guild building has just been enchanted, it is still lacking in its judgmental ability. Earlier, it crushed two people to death, and that has caused Spirit Awakener Sun Qiang to fly into a rage!"

"It crushed two people to death?" Hall Master Xing and Division Head Liao were taken aback.

"Un. It crushed the Twin Bandits of the Northern Meadow, Cang Xu and Dao Kou, to death earlier on..." Guild Leader Ruan swiftly filled Hall Master Xing and Division Head Liao in on the matter.

"The Twin Bandits of the Northern Meadows have killed innumerable people in their time. Who would have thought that they would lose their lives here?" After hearing those words, the two combat masters were startled for a moment before shaking their heads at the capriciousness of the world.

The Twin Bandits of the Northern Meadows were notorious within the Qingyuan Conferred Empire. If not for the fact that they were often hidden amid the marshlands, they would have long been hunted down by others.

Previously, the Qingyuan Empire's emperor had dispatched a force to have them eliminated, but the both of them still managed to get away. Eventually, they could only drop the matter.

Who knew that the both of them were brazen enough to step into Qingyuan City... and who would have thought that their lives would be ended beneath the feet of a mere building? Perhaps this was karma working its way around them.

While their minds were still dwelling on the matter, they suddenly heard the bellow of the young man ahead of them.

"Alright, stop acting pitifully here. Hurry up and seal the contract with Guild Leader Ruan!"

Zhang Xuan was truly angry.

As the saying goes, 'an untrimmed tree grows bent; an undisciplined man turns crooked!'

It was indeed true that the spirit of the guild building had just awoken, so it might not have understood much of the world. However, if it were to go undisciplined, wouldn't it go around killing others?

Zhang Xuan had always avoided causing trouble wherever he went, so why would a spirit he enchanted turn out to be so undependable?

How disappointing!

Seeing that Zhang Xuan was angry, the guild building dared not utter the slightest word of complaint. It indignantly stretched its slender neck toward Guild Leader Ruan.

Very soon, the contract was sealed.

"Thank you, Sun shi!" Having finally tamed the guild building, Guild Leader Ruan heaved a sigh of relief and clasped her fist toward the young man.

"There's no need to stand on ceremony..." Zhang Xuan waved his hand casually. "This fellow seems to have a bad temper, killing people on a whim. You have to keep a tight watch over it in the future!"

"The Twin Bandits of the Northern Meadows don't have too good of a reputation. In a sense, they deserved their fate. Rest assured, our Spirit Awakener Guild will deal with the matter, so Sun shi need not worry about it," Guild Leader Ruan said with a smile.

The abrupt deaths of two Primordial Spirit realm experts could cause pandemonium, but this might just work out to be a blessing in disguise for the Spirit Awakener Guild.

Even though most would not dare act against the Spirit Awakener Guild on the surface out of fear for its connections, its low fighting prowess paired with its wealth still made it an

attractive target for most, and there were those who operated in the shadows against it. However, if others were to learn that its guild building had just stomped two powerful Primordial Spirit realm experts to death, many would be deterred from the idea of laying their hands on the guild.

Such a matter could only be beneficial to them.

Zhang Xuan shook his head and said, "No matter what, they did die as a result of my doings. Here are two hundred high-tier spirit stones. If an opportunity arises, please hand it over to their offspring or kin!"

Even though the Twin Bandits of the Northern Meadows had committed many evil deeds and deserved to die, it should not have been by his hands. After all, they had not done much to him yet. Thus, he could not help but feel a little guilty about having killed them.

It had not been his intention to cause trouble.

All he wanted to do was to remain the pretty boy he was in the background, but trouble just had to keep knocking on his door.

Guild Leader Ruan hesitated for a moment, but seeing that Zhang Xuan had made up his mind, she eventually took the spirit stones from him and nodded. "This... Very well, we will handle this matter for you..."

At that moment, she could not help but feel a tinge of admiration for the young man.

He could have easily stood on the moral high ground and justified his actions through the immoral actions of the Twin Bandits, but he chose to acknowledge the portion of his sins in the matter as well. To stand up for what he did instead of making excuses, this was a true master teacher.

Putting everything aside, Kong shi had also caused a fair bit of trouble back then. However, it was how he resolved those

problems that won him the admiration of all, thus allowing him to eventually become respected as the World's Teacher.

"I'll be troubling you then..." Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. At this point, he suddenly remembered something and added, "I prefer to keep a low profile, so I don't want too many people to learn of this news. Thus, I hope that Guild Leader Ruan can help me keep a lid on the matter."

"Low profile?" Guild Leader Ruan's face twitched uncontrollably.

You enchanted the guild building, bringing it to life, shortly after you arrived and even killed two Primordial Spirit realm experts afterwards...

Is this your definition of low profile?

Surely there is not a single person who is more high profile than you!

However, since the other party had made such a request of her, Guild Leader Ruan still nodded and said, "Sun shi, rest assured. We will warn those in the area to keep silent about this matter."

It was also to their benefit for this matter to remain an enigma to the public. It might cause others to mistakenly assume that the Spirit Awakener Guild had a powerful expert in their midst, and this would further ensure their security.

"Sun shi, allow me to introduce you!" After chatting for a while longer, Guild Leader Ruan gestured Zhang Xuan over to two men standing not too far away. "These two men are the head of the Combat Master Hall, Xing Tianming, and the head of the Heart Division, Liao Bujin."

"Head of the Combat Master Hall?" Zhang Xuan was stunned.

One of the main reasons he came to the Qingyuan Conferred Empire was to lead the Xuanxuan Faction to an exchange with the Combat Master Hall. The date that they had agreed on was three days from now, so he had not really expected to see the other party

there.

"That's right. Hall Master Xing and Division Head Liao, this is Spirit Awakener Sun Qiang. He is a master teacher as well," Guild Leader Ruan said.

"Master teacher?" Hall Master Xing looked at Zhang Xuan with a frown. For some reason, he found the young man before him weirdly familiar. "May I know which Master Teacher Pavilion Sun shi is from?"

"I..." Zhang Xuan was just about to say that he was from Hongyuan Empire, but he quickly stopped himself before he could say those words.

If he were to reveal that he was from Hongyuan Empire, it would not take long for Hall Master Xing to connect the dots and uncover his true identity. If so, he would risk being exposed publicly that he had used a fake alias, and that would make the situation even more awkward.

"I have been wandering around with my teacher ever since I was young, so I haven't joined any Master Teacher Pavilion branches yet. I only took my master teacher examination in a Tier-1 Empire Master Teacher Pavilion..." Zhang Xuan quickly changed his words.

In the strictest sense, that could not be considered lying.

He had not joined any Master Teacher Pavilions, and he had indeed been wandering around the area.

"I see..." Hall Master Xing nodded.

There were indeed quite a few itinerant master teachers who chose not to join a Master Teacher Pavilion, so it wasn't particularly shocking.

However, considering the fact that the other party had not joined a Master Teacher Pavilion and yet could still wield such capability at his age, surpassing even Guild Leader Ruan and the others in the

field of spirit enchantment, his teacher was bound to be no ordinary figure!

After trading some pleasantries, Hall Master Xing finally popped the request with a look of anticipation. "I heard that Sun shi's has a deep grasp over spirit enchantment, so I came here hoping for you to enchant my Primordial Spirit..."

"Me?" Zhang Xuan was stunned.

In his studies, he did learn that spirit awakeners had the ability to nourish souls and Primordial Spirits, making them more wholesome. However, he had not thought that his first client would turn out to be... the head of the Combat Master Hall!

"Yes. I'll be truly grateful if Sun shi accedes to my request," Hall Master Xing quickly replied politely.

"That isn't a problem. However... I have one artifact whose spirit is currently in a dormant state, and I need to wake it up first. If Hall Master Xing does not mind, may I ask you to wait for a moment while I treat it?" Zhang Xuan asked.

Considering how the head of the Combat Master Hall had come over and earnestly made this request of him, he had no reason to turn him down. Besides, with the Heaven's Path Spirit Enchantment Art, reinforcing the other party's Primordial Spirit was not a particularly difficult task for him.

However, the Golden Origin Cauldron took priority over that.

"This..." Hall Master Xing and Division Head Liao frowned upon hearing those words, and they shot a glance at one another.

Based on what they had heard, waking a dormant spirit was a particularly difficult feat to pull off even for a spirit awakener. More importantly, it was highly depleting on the spirit awakener's soul energy as well. It was very likely that the other party would not be able to conduct a spirit enchantment for many days after that, and their matter couldn't afford to be delayed.

Hall Master Xing hesitated for a brief moment before asking, "Sun shi, may I speak with you privately?"

Hearing those words, Guild Leader Ruan knew that they needed some space to discuss private matters, so she clasped her fist with a smile. "I have just sealed the contract with the spirit of the guild building, so I still have to familiarize myself with it. I'll be taking my leave first..."

Vice Guild Leader Chen and Vice Guild Leader Xu followed closely behind her.

Seeing that the head of the Combat Master Hall wanted to speak privately with him, Zhang Xuan waved his hand and created an isolation barrier around him before turning his gaze back to the other party. "May I know what matter it is that you wish to speak of?"

Hall Master Xing gritted his teeth and said, "To be honest with you, our Combat Master Hall has been facing some huge problems recently. To deal with the threat at hand, I need to temper my Primordial Spirit as soon as possible so that I can clear the Trial of Inner Demons and raise my fighting prowess... or else, the consequences will be unimaginable! Thus... I hope to that Sun shi will enchant my Primordial Spirit first. For that, our Combat Master Hall is willing to fulfill any request that you have!"

"Huge problems?" Zhang Xuan was startled.

What kind of problem or enemy was the Combat Master Hall facing that left its head scrambling to raise his fighting prowess?

It was unimaginable that there was an enemy that even the Combat Master Hall was unable deal with. Just what kind of prodigious figure were they up against?

In that moment, Zhang Xuan could not help but feel a little apprehensive. It seemed like Qingyuan City was far more dangerous than he had thought!

Chapter 1110: Truly Impressive!

The Combat Master Hall was the guild that boasted the greatest fighting power within the Qingyuan Empire. Not even the Master Teacher Pavilion could compare to it!

Yet, even a power as strong as the Combat Master Hall was being forced to tread carefully, and judging from Hall Master Xing's tone, it seemed like they had been backed into a corner, possibly at stake of being completely wiped out. Just the thought of it was sufficient to leave cold sweat dripping down his back!

However, giving some deeper thought to it, Zhang Xuan felt that he might have been giving the matter too much thought. After all, if a disaster were to truly strike, news should have already spread far and wide. At the very least, as the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, he should have been privy to the news as well. As the old adage goes, 'no news is good news'. Given that Hall Master Xing still had the time to drop by the Spirit Awakener Guild to have his Primordial Spirit enchanted, the problem did not seem to be too severe.

"Pardon me, but may I ask what kind of problem the Combat Master Hall is facing? Perhaps, I might be able to help," Zhang Xuan said.

Given how the Combat Master Hall had accepted his request for an exchange readily, it was only right for him to reciprocate the favor and help them when they were in need.

Hearing Zhang Xuan's question, Hall Master Xing's face reddened, and he quickly waved his hand. "Sun shi, thank you for your concern. However, it would be better for our Combat Master Hall to resolve this problem by ourselves. It will suffice if you can just help reinforce my Primordial Spirit so that I could successfully clear the Trial of Inner Demons..."

If others were to learn that the source of his trouble was a mere

student faction from a Tier-1 Empire... he would never be able to raise his head anymore!

He simply could not bring himself to speak of this matter to another soul outside of the Combat Master Hall!

"This... Alright then!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

Since he had already mastered the art of spirit enchantment, he could treat the Golden Origin Cauldron any time he wanted. Considering that the head of the Combat Master Hall had gone so far as to plead with him, he could not bring himself to turn the other party down.

"Thank you, Sun shi!" Hearing the other party's agreement, Hall Master Xing was delighted. "Shall we find a better place to do the spirit enchantment?"

Due to the intricacies in enchanting a Primordial Spirit, it had to be conducted in absolute silence so that the spirit awakener would not be disturbed in the process. Considering that the guild building was running around at the moment, even killing two men at that, it did not seem like a fitting location to conduct the spirit enchantment.

"This..." Zhang Xuan scratched his head.

It did seem like the guild building would take some time to quieten down. Furthermore, it was one thing for the spirit enchantment to fail, but if the guild building were to go on a rampage once more and stomp the head of the Combat Master Hall to death, he could see himself being apprehended and executed not too long later.

"Our Combat Master Hall's Heart Division has a formation that isolates the space within from the external world. Why don't we head there instead?" Division Head Liao suggested.

"Sounds good." Zhang Xuan nodded.

In truth, he had also been planning to drop by the Combat

Master Hall to take a look, and since the other party was inviting him over at this moment, there was no reason for him to turn them down. Also, it would be a good opportunity for him to assess the fighting prowess of the combat masters before mentally preparing the members of the Xuanxuan Faction for it.

Otherwise, he would be put in a spot if that bunch were to get into trouble here.

After bidding Guild Leader Ruan and the others farewell, Zhang Xuan followed Hall Master Xing back to the Combat Master Hall.

The Qingyuan Empire Combat Master Hall was located not too far away from his accommodation. It was a majestic building that exuded a powerful aura, deterring any troublemakers from committing any foolishness.

"It is even bigger than the Spirit Awakener Guild..." Zhang Xuan was astonished. He could not help but wonder. If I were to successfully enchant this building, it would surely be able to run faster than the Spirit Awakener Guild's building...

"Sun shi, this is our Combat Master Hall! Our Combat Master Hall is divided into Ten Divisions..." Seeing that Zhang Xuan was looking around curiously, Division Head Liao began introducing the basic structure of the Combat Master Hall. "... and I am the head of the Heart Division!"

"The Ten Divisions of the Combat Master Hall..." Zhang Xuan made a mental note.

He had never really heard about it from anyone before. He would have to inform Ruohuan gongzi and the others of the matter so that they could take note of it during the exchange.

"Footwork Division, Weapon Division, Palm Division, Fist Division... I can roughly fathom what those divisions are focused on, but what does the Heart Division specialize in?" Zhang Xuan asked with intrigue.

It was not too difficult to guess what the other divisions did from their names, but what in the world was the Heart Division?

"Actually, the Heart Division is the most important, as well as the most fearsome division in the Combat Master Hall!" The one who responded to Zhang Xuan's question was Hall Master Xing.

"Oh?" Zhang Xuan was perplexed.

"One of the core responsibilities of the Combat Master Hall is to fend off the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe. However, the killing intent that Otherworldly Demons emanate is incredibly potent, and over time, it will slowly corrode one's mind and soul. In order to withstand their killing intent, it is of the utmost importance that combat masters possess mental resilience far surpassing others. It is also for this reason that the Heart Division was founded"! Hall Master Xing explained.

"As the saying goes, it's the brave who survive an encounter on a narrow bridge. There are many cases where a cultivator possessing more condensed zhenqi, a more resilient physical body, and stronger soul energy ends up losing to an opponent far weaker than them! In a battle, it's not only strength and technique that counts. More often than not, it's a clash of wills as well, and the one with the stronger will is often the one standing at the end!"

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement.

He could relate with that point of view as well.

Taking himself for example, he had encountered plenty of opponents who were stronger than him in every aspect. However, be it the Scarletleaf King, Skyleaf King, or even Dao Kou, despite possessing the decisive advantage in a direct battle against him, they still ended up dying by his hand.

Ultimately, this could be boiled down to the differing intensity of their wills.

A cultivator lacking a strong will would find themselves being

beguiled or outmaneuvered by their opponent, thus eventually suffering an untimely death.

That was not to say that cultivating one's body and zhenqi weren't important, but it was only with a state of mind that was proportionately powerful with one's abilities would one be able to bring forth one's full strength.

Looking Wang Ying for example, despite cultivating the Heaven's Path Movement Art, her lack of confidence still eventually resulted in her loss in the Teacher Evaluation back at Hongtian Academy.

That matter had taught Zhang Xuan that he had to pay close heed to the mental development of his disciples as well. Even though Wang Ying was still a little shy in front of strangers, she was at least much more decisive than before.

"The development of the mind is extremely important. The combat masters of the Heart Division have a far firmer will compared to those from the other divisions, allowing them to stand unwaveringly before the temptations of the world," said Hall Master Xing.

Of the two hundred combat masters who had joined the Xuanxuan Faction, there was not a single one that was from the Heart Division. In fact, while the other division heads were easily drawn by the benefits that the Xuanxuan Faction offered, Division Head Liao was the only one who had been able to retain his composure, even calmly strategized a solution out of the quandary for him!

All of this was a result of his cultivation of his state of mind.

At this point, Hall Master Xing could not help but feel deeply regretful for neglecting to enforce the cultivation of the state of mind within the Combat Master Hall. If he had done that in the first place, the Combat Master Hall might not have been cornered by the Xuanxuan Faction in the first place.

"The Trial of Inner Demons can be divided into many different levels, and the strength of the inner demon in each level differs from one another as well. By clashing frequently with one's inner demons, one can temper one's will and reinforce one's state of mind!" Hall Master Xing explained.

Zhang Xuan nodded.

His will had become significantly more resilient after facing an inner demon during the Saint Ascension Ordeal, inducing a significant rise in his Soul Depth. Were it not for the inner demon being too weak, the benefits that he would have received could have been much greater than that!

A thought suddenly came to Zhang Xuan's mind, and his eyes lit up. "The Trial of Inner Demons sounds truly interesting. Could I give it a try as well to temper my will?"

"Of course! That's not a problem at all!" Hall Master Xing replied with a smile.

"You have my gratitude!" Zhang Xuan thanked him with a smile in return.

As long as he could withstand the temptation of the inner demons, he could elevate his state of mind to greater heights. Since the Trial of Inner Demons had such a function as well, it would be a waste not to use it!

While they were chatting, the crowd walked into the Combat Master Hall.

Behind the majestic building front was a cluster of buildings. They were clearly segregated into ten areas, which probably corresponded to each of the Ten Divisions.

Division Head Liao led the way forward, and it did not take long for them to arrive in the Heart Division.

Before them stood a huge, pitch-black building with a bizarre design that was strikingly similar to a heart. From afar, it looked as

if the heart was beating swiftly.

"This is the Heart Division," Division Head Liao said as he led the way into the building.

As soon as Zhang Xuan stepped into the building, he immediately felt rich spiritual energy gushing at him. Not only so, a unique atmosphere seemed to linger in the air within the building, bringing tranquility to one's heart.

"We have set up a formation that gathers spiritual energy and calms the minds of those within the building. Sun shi, why don't you conduct the spirit enchantment for Hall Master Xing here?" Division Head Liao proposed as they arrived in one of the rooms in the Heart Division.

Zhang Xuan nodded.

The Heart Division was much quieter than the Spirit Awakener Guild, making its environment much more suitable for conducting a spirit enchantment. It would probably be much easier for him to wake the Golden Origin Cauldron's spirit here too.

After finding a suitable area within the room, Zhang Xuan gestured to the spot before him and said, "Hall Master Xing, please take a seat."

"Un." Knowing that this would determine whether or not they would be able to resolve the crisis that the Combat Master Hall was facing, Hall Master Xing quickly nodded and took a seat.

"Calm your mind and focus your consciousness within your Primordial Spirit," Zhang Xuan instructed.

"Alright." Hall Master Xing closed his eyes and centered his consciousness around his Primordial Spirit. In a moment, he entered a trance, reminiscent of a meditating old monk.

Not bad! Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up in commendation.

It was just a moment ago that the other party had still harbored

emotions of anxiety and apprehension, but in the blink of an eye, he had reined in his emotions entirely and freed up his mind. His control over his state of mind and emotions was truly terrifying.

It seems like Wang Ying and the others still have a long way to go, Zhang Xuan remarked internally.

Having learned the Heaven's Path battle techniques from him, Wang Ying and the others could be considered invincible existences within their power class. However, in terms of state of mind, they were nowhere on par with Hall Master Xing.

The ability to control one's state of mind freely might not seem like much, but it could play a decisive role in battle.

In controlled circumstances such as an official tournament, Zhang Xuan was confident that Wang Ying and the others would be able to achieve victory easily. However, if it was a fight to the death, the veteran combat masters would be able to play on their weak minds and make them panic, and this would inadvertently result in openings in their movements.

This was inevitable. It was possible for Wang Ying and the others to advance their cultivation swiftly, but the same was clearly infeasible for their state of mind. Ultimately, they were still too young. In terms of mental resilience, there was no way they could rival the much older and experienced combat masters.

Zhang Xuan made a mental note. I really have to pay more attention to the cultivation of their state of mind...

Those thoughts were swiftly tossed aside from his mind. He knew that this was not the time to be contemplating such matters. Raising his gaze to face Hall Master Xing, he focused his mind as he slowly placed his palm down on the ground.

Weng!

A circle of light shrouded Hall Master Xing.

Driving the Heaven's Path Spirit Enchantment Art, Zhang Xuan

warped his consciousness into a thin thread before carefully delving into the other party's mind.

Enchanting an artifact was different from enchanting a Primordial Spirit. The former only required the spirit awakener to light up the flames of spirit within the artifact's consciousness, but as for the enchantment of a Primordial Spirit, the spirit awakener would have to extend his consciousness into the cultivator's mind and slowly search for the flaws and openings within it to repair.

As Zhang Xuan approached Hall Master Xing's Primordial Spirit, he could not help but widen his eyes in shock. He's even more fearsome than the Skyleaf King...

Regardless of whether it was the quality or the size, Hall Master Xing's Primordial Spirit had far surpassed that of the Skyleaf King!

Considering that Hall Master Xing's Primordial Spirit was already far stronger than that of the Leaving Aperture realm Skyleaf King despite only being at the Half-Leaving Aperture realm, it was difficult to imagine how terrifying his might would be once he became a full-fledged Leaving Aperture realm expert!

With such incredible strength, he should be able to withstand a third of my strength if he suppresses his cultivation to my level, Zhang Xuan thought in awe.

Truly impressive!

Chapter 1111: What a Long Rift

Even though the Skyleaf King had only been at Leaving Aperture realm primary stage, his Primordial Spirit had already undergone the tempering of the Leaving Aperture Ordeal, bringing the strength of his Primordial Spirit to a whole new level. However, Hall Master Xing was only at Half-Leaving Aperture realm, but his Primordial Spirit was already far stronger than that of the Skyleaf King. This was truly frightening.

Even so, provided that they were in the same cultivation realm, it was still impossible for Hall Master Xing to defeat him.

After all, he had cultivated the Saint Ascension Decipher and ascended to become a Celestial Saint. In his power class, there were none who could possibly be a match for him. The fact that Hall Master Xing was able to withstand a third of his strength was already an incredible feat in itself.

Let me see what kind of flaws there are in his Primordial Spirit... Activating his Eye of Insight, Zhang Xuan began assessing the sight before him.

The Primordial Spirit ahead of him had a transparent quality reminiscent of a perfect crystal.

Any other spirit awakener in his place would have been awed by the overwhelming might of the Primordial Spirit, but with the sharp gaze of Zhang Xuan's Eye of Insight, he was able to easily find innumerable flaws in the Primordial Spirit. There were many gaps that presented themselves in the form of depressions on the surface of the Primordial Spirit that would have prevented the flow of thought and power.

In a way, it was similar to glass; while it seemed flat and smooth to the human eye, one would find little bumps and depressions on it when placed under a microscope.

The Eye of Insight was capable of peering through the essence of items. Even though the other party's Primordial Spirit appeared transparent and perfect on the surface, ultimately, it was not formed from cultivating the Heaven's Path Divine Art. When magnified, Zhang Xuan was able to see all kinds of depressions and rifts on it.

After studying it for a moment, Zhang Xuan nodded. As long as I fill up those depressions, it will be difficult for inner demons to assault him.

Inner demons were formed from the deepest desires or the apprehension within one's heart. If one's Primordial Spirit was perfect, devoid of depressions and openings, it would be like a completely sealed egg, making it difficult for inner demons to breach one's defenses.

Zhang Xuan smiled as he reached his hand forward. Fortunately, the depressions aren't too big, so it won't be too difficult to resolve the issue.

With every single tap, a bundle of spirit would fill up the depressions within Hall Master Xing's Primordial Spirit. The glow that it radiated gradually became brighter and brighter, and eventually, it was nearly blinding.

Hmm? There's a long rift here. While traveling around Hall Master Xing's Primordial Spirit, Zhang Xuan suddenly caught sight of something that left a deep frown on his forehead.

At the back of Hall Master Xing's Primordial Spirit, there was a glaring rift that extended down the center, from one end to the other.

Even though it isn't too deep, it has severed many of the connections within the Primordial Spirit, preventing it from functioning normally. Zhang Xuan stroked his lower jaw and fell into deep thought.

It seemed like Hall Master Xing's Primordial Spirit had been severely injured at some point, or else it was impossible for there to be such a huge rift on his Primordial Spirit.

Zhang Xuan scratched his head as he contemplated. It's not too difficult to fill up the smaller depressions using the means I have learned from the spirit awakener books. But, such a huge rift... How should I go about fixing it?

Judging the huge size of the rift, reminiscent of a valley in the Primordial Spirit, it was apparent that ordinary means would not work on it.

To make an analogy, a wall that had depressions could easily be plastered over to make it smooth once more, but if half of the wall collapsed altogether, the repair work would be far more complicated than that.

Suddenly, Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up in excitement.

Wait... While ordinary methods will not work, if I use the method that I use for artifact enchantment within this rift, I might just be able to fill it up swiftly!

Ordinary methods were unlikely to work, but considering how his spirit enchantment could bring even the massive building of the Spirit Awakener Guild to life, it should not be too difficult for him to create a spirit within the crevice to fill it up.

There had been no records on anyone doing this before, but... didn't Kong shi just offer him some advice not too long ago?

He had to innovate and forge his own path!

Sticking along with the conventions would just limit his potential!

And this was the time for him to do so. If he were to succeed, Hall Master Xing would surely be able to clear the Trial of Inner Demons easily and resolve the problem plaguing the Combat Master Hall!

Kong shi is the World's Teacher; there can't be any mistake trusting him! Zhang Xuan nodded his head in satisfaction.

He swiftly assessed the feasibility of the matter based on his comprehension on spirit enchantment. There might be some side effects from doing so, but it won't affect his core.

One of the problems in this solution was that the spirit used to fill up the rift would have its own consciousness as well, similar to that of the guild building. There was a chance that it would run amok.

This would be a huge problem for anyone else, but not for Zhang Xuan. All he had to do was eradicate that consciousness right after the spirit was born.

If it had been any other spirit awakener in his place, the other party would probably have been forced into a bitter fight against the spirit in order to erase it, and in the process of doing so, that might even have harmed Hall Master Xing's Primordial Spirit. However, as a soul oracle and a poison master, Zhang Xuan had many means that would allow him to effectively deal with spirits.

Alright, it's settled then...

Having conducted a simulation of the entire process in the head and confirming it to be feasible once more, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

Drawing his consciousness back to his body, he turned to Division Head Liao and instructed, "Division Head Liao, I'll need you to guard us. By no means should anyone interrupt us during the course of the spirit enchantment!"

Division Head Liao nodded in response. "Rest assured!"

Nodding back, Zhang Xuan took a deep breath and closed his eyes once more. His will slipped into Hall Master Xing's mind along with the light, and in the blink of an eye, he was standing before the rift once more. With a grim expression, he stepped forward

and tapped on the rift lightly.

Hu!

The darkness within the rift was slightly cleared by the emergence of a spark of light.

However, the spark was still too small to fill the entire rift. Zhang Xuan had to create another eight sparks before the light was able to cover the entire rift.

After that was finally done, he could not help but feel deeply exhausted.

Previously, in order to enchant the guild building of the Spirit Awakener Guild, he had produced thirty-two sparks, and over here, he had created another eight. All in all, he had already used the abilities of a spirit awakener for more than forty times when the limit for the average spirit awakener was only three times.

With that, he had finally reached his limit.

I need to wipe away that newborn spirit.

Even though Zhang Xuan was exhausted, he knew that it was not the time to rest. Suppressing his exhaustion, he walked up to the rift.

He had to eradicate it as soon as possible, or else the clash of the two wills would cause Hall Master Xing great suffering.

Gathering his soul energy, a brilliant glow gathered on Zhang Xuan's palm. He was just about to make a move when...

Hong long!

The door to the room suddenly burst open. Following which, an anxious voice exclaimed, "Hall Master Xing, bad news..."

Shit... Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes in alarm.

He had just been about to speak when the massive Primordial Spirit before him rose from its dormant state. It abruptly released

a powerful aura that jolted Zhang Xuan's will out.

Hall Master Xing had awoken from his trance due to that shouting, and as a natural defensive mechanism of his body, Zhang Xuan's will was viewed as a foreign object and forcefully expelled from his mind.

If Zhang Xuan had been in his peak state, he would still have been able to withstand the simple instinctive reflex of Hall Master Xing's body easily. However, drained from all of the spirit enchantments he had done that day, he was feeling sluggish and weak all over, leaving him in no state to defend against Hall Master Xing's reflexive actions.

Returning back to his body, Zhang Xuan opened his eyes and saw an old man standing within the room with a frantic look. Division Head Liao was berating the old man with a deep frown on his forehead, seemingly criticizing the other party for abruptly barging in forcefully.

Having regained consciousness, Hall Master Xing turned to the old man and asked, "Division Head Wei, what's the matter?"

"Hall Master Xing, Division Head Wu of the Footwork Division has also left the Combat Master Hall for the Xuan... that place!" Division Head Wei reported anxiously.

As there was an outsider around, he did not dare say the name 'Xuanxuan Faction'. Otherwise, if others learned that their combat masters had willingly defected to another organization, they would surely have become the joke of the town.

"He still went in the end," Hall Master Xing muttered with a livid expression.

He had thought that his division heads would at least still be able to hold themselves back, but who would have thought that they would succumb to the temptation in the end?

He felt so choked up that he could vomit blood.

Hall Master Xing was just about to speak when the person who had just enchanted his Primordial Spirit for him, Sun shi, suddenly asked with a deeply worried look, "You... Are you still fine?"

"I'm fine. Right, I haven't thanked Sun shi for enchanting my Primordial Spirit yet. I feel like my fighting prowess has been raised another notch, and my entire body is gushing with power!" Hall Master Xing replied with a smile.

As expected of a master spirit awakener, the other party's means were indeed formidable. Just a single session of enchantment, and he could already feel the strength of his Primordial Spirit rising by leaps and bounds.

He felt that it would not be a problem even if he were to challenge the Leaving Aperture Ordeal in his current state.

"I see... I'm glad to see that you are fine!" Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

It seemed like he had worried excessively. Even though he had enchanted a spirit into the other party's Primordial Spirit in order to fill the rift, it only made up a very small portion of it. Under the suppression of Hall Master Xing's powerful Primordial Spirit, it was likely that it would be assimilated before it could do anything.

After thanking Sun shi, Hall Master Xin stood up with a resilient glint in his eyes. "Division Head Liao, prepare the formation. I'll be heading over right now!"

There were only Ten Division Heads in the Combat Master Hall, and five of them had already defected to the Xuanxuan Faction. Granted that it was not a true defection—they were only there to learn battle techniques for the time being—but still... if others were to learn of the matter, it would not reflect well on their Combat Master Hall! Their pride and honor were at risk of being shattered!

He had to resolve this problem at its root once and for all.

"Alright!" Knowing that the situation was urgent, Division Head Liao quickly rushed into action as well. He led the way to a huge hall before placing his palm on a mechanism. A burst of light shone, and a one-man passageway emerged before them.

"I'll be entering now," Hall Master Xing stated. He turned around to look at Zhang Xuan and said, "Sun shi, I'm afraid that I'll have to ask you to stay a while longer. If I fail the trial this time around, I might require your help once more..."

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded.

After which, Hall Master Xing stepped in.

Watching him leave, Zhang Xuan finally felt exhaustion overcoming his body. Thus, he took a seat on the ground, closed his eyes, and began meditating so as to recuperate from his previous exertion.

He had to drive his soul energy using the Heaven's Path Spirit Enchantment Art ten times before his exhaustion finally alleviated. When he opened his eyes once more, he saw Division Head Liao pacing around the entrance nervously, looking into the passageway from time to time.

"What's wrong?" Zhang Xuan stood up and walked over.

"Hall Master Xing has been inside more than two hours now. I fear that something bad might have befallen him during the trial!" Division Head Liao replied with a worried frown.

"He isn't out yet?" Zhang Xuan also frowned upon hearing those words.

He had been too busy recuperating previously, so he was not too aware of the passing of time. However, doing a swift calculation at the moment, it did seem like two hours had already passed.

This did not make sense. Regardless of whether Hall Master Xing passed or not, the results should have been out by now. It did not make sense for there to not be the slightest movements at all.

"Yes, he isn't out yet," Division Head Liao replied apprehensively. "No matter whether he has cleared the trial or not, he should have at least sent a message by now. However, there's been no news from him at all."

Right after those words were spoken, flurried footsteps suddenly sounded from the passageway. Following which, a figure came into sight.

"You are... Hall Master Xing? W-what happened to you?"

Upon seeing the appearance of the figure, Division Head Liao's lips twitched as his body froze from astonishment.

At the same time, Zhang Xuan also caught sight of the figure, and he nearly fainted on the spot.

"What is that monster?"

Chapter 1112: Hall Master Xing Has Been Eaten

It was a face covered in huge tumors, and at the very top of his head, there was even a crimson tower of meat stretching half a meter upwards. In this moment, Hall Master Xing looked like a moving cactus!

It was only due to his face retaining some semblance to his original appearance that they did not suspect him of being an inner demon who had escaped from the passageway... However, his appearance was truly eerie!

Didn't he just challenge Trial of Inner Demons?

Why did he look as if he had just been pummeled?

"Hall Master Xing!" Division Head Liao hurriedly rushed forward and cried, "Even if you couldn't clear the trial, you shouldn't have harmed yourself like this..."

The Trial of Inner Demons only served to assess one's mind, so it didn't pose any harm to the physical body. Yet, for Hall Master Xing to return in such a state... Was he so upset about failing the trial that he decided to harm himself?

"You..." Hall Master Xing nearly fainted from anger. He turned to Zhang Xuan, pointed at the tumors on his face furiously, and asked, "Sun shi, can you tell me what is going on over here?"

Not expecting to be dragged into the matter, Zhang Xuan was startled. "You are asking me? How would I know?"

"You really don't know?" Hall Master Xing asked with narrowed eyes as he turned around.

Upon seeing what was behind Hall Master Xing, Zhang Xuan nearly spurted blood.

A crimson flower bud was growing right on the other party's

bottom.

A flower on the bottom and a cactus on the head... Zhang Xuan scratched his head in confusion for a moment when a thought suddenly came to him, and his lips twitched. Could it be that... I enchanted the spirit of a plant instead of an artifact into him earlier?

Naturally, different beings had fundamentally differing spirits.

Plant spirits could allow the medicinal herb it was harnessed within to mature swifter and healthier. However, if the spirit died, it was very likely that the entire medicinal herb would wither as well.

Such was the case for most saint herbs.

This was similar to the Bodhi Saint Tree. In the period of time that its spirit was asleep, it looked as if it was dead on the surface. This left Emperor Yu Shenqing in a panic, and he had searched far and wide for herbologists to treat it, nearly resulting in a calamity.

As such, dealing with spirits was also an extremely profound subject, such that it was worth others devoting their whole lives to studying.

That isn't right. I'm certain that I used the method to enchant artifacts on it. Zhang Xuan frowned.

No matter how he thought about it, he just could not understand how an artifact spirit could have possibly turned into a plant spirit.

While he was deep in thought, the bud on Hall Master Xing's bottom suddenly began blossoming, and an indescribably horrendous smell drifted from it. Shortly after, the cactus on his head also began blooming. In a moment, a bunch of flowers could be seen hanging on his head, making him look like a reindeer.

Its growth rate is clearly one of a plant spirit, so could I have really made a mistake? Wait, I've got it!

A thought suddenly struck Zhang Xuan at this moment. Even though I used the method to enchant artifacts on it, the rich vitality with Hall Master Xing's body resulted in the artifact spirit displaying properties similar to those of a plant spirit. This is also why Hall Master Xing's body has transformed in such a bizarre manner as well.

Zhang Xuan had not made any mistakes in his enchantment, but due to the differences in the environment, it was inevitable that the artifact spirit would display unexpected properties from when it was in an artifact.

Most artifacts were non-living until they were enchanted, as shown by their pitch-black world within them. On the other hand, Hall Master Xing's Primordial Spirit was pulsating with life. It was an environment far more nourishing than any soil. As such, it was inevitable that the spirit that Zhang Xuan had enchanted into his Primordial Spirit had grown frenziedly.

Cough cough!

Upon making sense of what was going on, a bizarre look crept onto Zhang Xuan's face.

With the great strength wielded by Hall Master Xing's Primordial Spirit, he could still easily suppress the spirit within him easily, preventing it from running amok. However, shortly after having his Primordial Spirit enchanted, he had entered the Trial of Inner Demons, and his mind had come under attack. In his moment of weakness, the spirit had managed to make a comeback and grew frenziedly, thus resulting in the ridiculous circumstances at this moment.

But... what the heck was that plant?

While it resembled a cactus, it was not really one, and the flower on his bottom looked foreign as well.

Ah, it seemed like he had made a grave mistake trusting Kong

shi's words!

It was due to the other party's advice that he had taken a leap of faith forward, in hopes of forging his path. Who could have known that barely after he took the first step, he already found himself dropping into a pit?

Kacha! Kacha!

Just as Zhang Xuan was in deep thought, the flowers of the cactus finally matured into fruits roughly the size of a jujube. Round and crimson, it might sound weird to say this, but it looked deeply appetizing.

"What the heck are these?" Seeing that fruits were growing on him, Hall Master Xing was on the verge of tears. He looked at Zhang Xuan desperately, hoping that the latter could resolve his situation.

Even though he was not too sure what was going on, he had an inkling that it had something to do with the spirit enchantment.

Otherwise, given that he had never possessed the ability to flower in the past, why would his talent as a plant blossom all of a sudden?

"Cough cough. I'm not too sure what has happened either. Perhaps you ate something unclean a while ago. Let me take a look at your condition, and I'll see what I can do about it." Knowing that he might be pummeled to life if he admitted that he was the culprit, Zhang Xuan spoke without the slightest redness on his face.

Honestly speaking, it was not his intention for the situation to end up in such a manner. Judging from the size of the rift in Hall Master Xing's Primordial Spirit, Zhang Xuan knew that it would be nigh impossible for the other party to clear the Trial of Inner Demons if he left it be.

On top of that, it was apparent that Hall Master Xing was in a

rush to raise his fighting prowess to deal with some kind of threat, and it was for this reason that Zhang Xuan decided to take the risk after confirming that it was feasible, and it would not pose any threat to the other party's life.

Furthermore, he did plan to deal with the spirit, but he just had to be disrupted at the very last moment, resulting in his efforts to be rendered futile.

Still, it was indeed a stupefying sight to see the head of the Combat Master Hall, one of the strongest experts in Qingyuan Empire, walking around with a cactus head covered with delectable fruits and a bizarre flower on his bottom.

If he were to charge an entrance toll for this exhibit, he could probably earn a huge fortune out of this.

"I have eaten something unclean?" Hall Master Xing stared at Zhang Xuan with an unbelievable look on his face. However, knowing that it was meaningless to point fingers at this moment, he could only concede. "Sun shi, I beseech you to help me..."

"Very well!" Sitting on the ground, Zhang Xuan began exerting his spirit awakener prowess once more and entered Hall Master Xing's mind.

He adeptly maneuvered his way over to the other party's Primordial Spirit, and when he looked at where the rift had been, he could not help but freeze.

His efforts had not been futile; the rift had been completely filled up at this moment. However, this had led to another troubling matter—Hall Master Xing's Primordial Spirit had already fused completely with the enchanted spirit.

This... Zhang Xuan's eyelids twitched uncontrollably. His Primordial Spirit is way too adaptable!

Typically speaking, the spirit that Zhang Xuan had enchanted should have been considered a foreign object, and the Primordial

Spirit would have tried its best to expel it. Yet, within just two short hours, the spirit had actually succeeded in fusing perfectly with Hall Master Xing's Primordial Spirit.

Originally, all Zhang Xuan had to do was head to the rift and eliminate the consciousness within the spirit, thus putting it entirely under Hall Master Xing's control. However, now that the spirit had already fused together with Hall Master Xing's Primordial Spirit, its consciousness had been intermixed together with Hall Master Xing's, meaning that course of action was out of the question.

If he attempted to wipe out that consciousness, he would risk killing Hall Master Xing as well.

Most likely, the spirit must have hastened the fusion while his mind was preoccupied by the inner demons.

Had he known that such a situation would happen, he would have stopped Hall Master Xing from entering the Trial of Inner Demons at any cost. Now that the other party's head had turned into a cactus covered with fruits and his bottom was sprouting a flower... This was truly a disaster!

Zhang Xuan withdrew his consciousness from Hall Master Xing's mind as he frowned in distress.

It's fortunate that the enchanted spirit doesn't have any offensive ability. However, now that it's fused into his Primordial Spirit, it is no longer possible to resolve the issue externally. He will have to eliminate that spirit himself.

There were indeed some cultivators in the world who used certain secret arts to consume plant spirits in order to enhance their Primordial Spirit and souls. While Hall Master Xing did not cultivate any of such secret arts, it seemed like the sheer strength of his Primordial Spirit had helped to facilitate a smooth fusion with the spirit. However, the first step of those secret arts was to eliminate the consciousness within the spirits, and in Hall Master

Xing's case, the fusion had happened without him knowing, so he had ended up skipping the vital first step.

He did manage to perfect his Primordial Spirit in the end, but the existence of two consciousnesses within his Primordial Spirit had inevitably resulted in all kinds of bizarre problems cropping up.

For one, the spirit, through its instincts, was delightfully tapping into the huge reserves of vitality within Hall Master Xing's body to grow non-stop.

While Zhang Xuan was still deep in thought, the cactus on Hall Master Xing's head grew higher and higher, and the flower on his bottom grew more and more warped. From afar, he resembled a massive plant, rooted quietly to the spot.

Such a feeling was further accentuated as more and more jujube-like fruits sprouted from his head, making him seem like a bona fide fruit tree.

Noting that Zhang Xuan had withdrawn his consciousness from his mind, Hall Master Xing asked anxiously, "Sun shi, do you know any way to resolve this issue?"

"I have identified the root of your problem, but I still need some time to think the matter through," Zhang Xuan said awkwardly.

What the heck was this?

The other party had earnestly made a request of him, but he had ended up causing such a huge mishap.

How embarrassing!

Hall Master Xing heaved a sigh of relief. "It's good that you have identified the root of the problem."

While there was still no solution at the moment, at the very least, with the root of the problem identified, there should still be hope for a cure.

Otherwise, if he had to spend his entire life in such a form, he

would much rather have a knife plunged straight into his chest.

At that moment, 'jiya!', the door to the room opened. Division Head Wei walked in with large strides, and upon seeing the tree, he could not help but walk up to it and remark, "What a weird-looking tree!"

After saying those words, he reached out and plucked one of the fruits before biting down on it heartily. Then, he turned to Division Head Liao and Zhang Xuan, and asked, "Is Hall Master Xing not out yet? It has already been two hours!"

"..." Hall Master Xing.

"..." Division Head Liao.

"..." Zhang Xuan.

Grinding his teeth tightly together, Hall Master Xing replied menacingly, "I am over here..."

It was one thing for him to be treated as a tree, but to think that someone would actually eat his fruit.

"Hall Master Xing!" It was then that Division Head Wei noticed that Hall Master Xing's face was on the tree. In that instant, the motion of his mouth came to a halt, and he widened his eyes in shock.

"Cough cough! Sun shi, you should quickly find a way to cure him. Otherwise, putting aside resolving our current crisis, he won't even be able to face our fellow combat masters!" Division Head Liao said anxiously.

"Un. The reason for Hall Master Xing's current condition is due to a spirit fusing with his Primordial Spirit. At this stage, I'm afraid that it's impossible to solve his situation externally anymore. He will have to cultivate a technique to eliminate the spirit within his Primordial Spirit. Nevertheless, rest assured that he will revert back to normal once the spirit is eliminated," Zhang Xuan explained.

Hall Master Xing heaved a sigh of relief before asking, "Then, is Sun shi in possession of any techniques that are capable of eliminating a spirit?"

"That... I'm afraid not!" Zhang Xuan scratched his head awkwardly.

The Spirit Awakener Guild did have techniques that allowed one to eliminate spirits externally, but the current predicament Hall Master Xing was in made it risky to adopt such a solution. And as for secret arts to eliminate spirit internally... he did not have any such manuals in his possession.

Hall Master Xing staggered, and despair loomed in his eyes. "Am I doomed to live in this state for the rest of my life?"

"Actually, I do have another solution that will revert you back to normal swiftly..." Zhang Xuan hesitated for a moment before continuing. "Firstly, I'll sever the plant offshoots from your body to hinder their activity. After which, I'll concoct some poison for you to swallow. The poison serves to temporarily lower the vitality within your body and deprive the plants of their nutrients. With some time, they should wither and die off. However, you mustn't use your cultivation during this period of time, or else they will come right back to life!"

"You want me to consume poison?" Hall Master Xing gulped down a mouthful of saliva as his face paled. He could not help but tremble at that thought.

Just a spirit enchantment from you has already left me in such a state. If I consume the poison you concoct, what in the world will happen to me?

At the same time, he could not help but ask doubtfully, "For you to be able to concoct poison, could you be a... poison master?"

Chapter 1113: What a Dark Color

The higher ranked a poison master was, the more feared they were by the populace.

And a poison master who could concoct poison that was effective even against a Half-Leaving Aperture realm expert... That was truly fearsome!

At the very least, he must be at 7-star pinnacle.

"That's not it. I am a physician, and with my knowledge of medicinal herbs, I should be able to easily deduce a prescription for your condition!" Zhang Xuan replied calmly.

Considering that the man standing before him was the head of the Combat Master Hall, there was no way he could admit that he was a poison master.

Hall Master Xing shook his head. "I'll pass then..."

As much as physicians were knowledgeable about medicinal herbs, there was still a significant difference between the field of study for physicians and poison masters. In the concoction of poison, the slightest difference in the environment or combination of medicinal herbs could result in a huge difference in the resulting medicinal property. Just relying on fundamental knowledge of medicinal herbs would not suffice for one to deal with poison.

Otherwise, if every physician could be a poison master as well, the existence of a 'poison master' occupation would have been rendered meaningless.

Hall Master Xing was not willing to bet his life on that possibility.

"Are there no other ways beside these two options?" Division Head Liao asked with a frown.

One was unfeasible at the moment whereas the other one was too risky. He had thought that with a high-ranked spirit awakener to

enchant the Primordial Spirit of Hall Master Xing, the latter's fighting prowess should be able to be increased by leaps and bounds. Yet, who would have thought that the latter would end up being crippled instead?

What was with this?

Zhang Xuan hesitated for a moment before saying, "Actually... I do have another solution. I just fear that... you will be reluctant to agree to it!"

"Tell us!"

"It's actually rather simple. Open up your Primordial Spirit and allow me to probe into it. I'll find the sentience of the spirit within your Primordial Spirit and kill it," Zhang Xuan replied.

The three combat masters glanced at one another and fell silent.

Opening up one's Primordial Spirit meant to lower every single line of defense one had. If the other party attempted to do anything to Hall Master Xing, he would be completely helpless to retaliate.

Hall Master Xing shook his head. "I apologize, but... I can't do that!"

Even if the person was the trusted Division Head Liao, he still would not be willing to lower all of his defenses, let alone an unreliable stranger!

"There's nothing else I can do then, unless..." Another thought came to Zhang Xuan's mind, but before he could speak of it, he swiftly shook his head.

"What?"

Zhang Xuan looked at Hall Master Xing hesitantly before eventually relenting. "I can try concocting some poison that is capable of wiping away the spirit in your Primordial Spirit. Of course, that is easier said than done, and I might require multiple

attempts before I get it."

With his comprehension of poison, it was not entirely impossible for him to succeed in that. However, Hall Master Xing's situation was a little peculiar—a cactus growing fruits on his head and a flower sprouting on his bottom—so it was a little difficult for him to ascertain the type of spirit so as to determine what would be effective. Thus, it might require several attempts before he got it right.

"That won't do!" Hall Master Xing quickly refuted the idea with twitching lips.

A poison that would kill the spirit could very well end up killing him! If he were to let the other party to experiment on him... wouldn't it be more likely for him to die first?

"That's all I've got. If none of that works with you, there's nothing else I can do..." Zhang Xuan shook his head.

Honestly speaking, he was not entirely at fault for this matter either. He had warned Division Head Liao to prevent anyone from entering, but Division Head Wei just had to barge into the room in the midst of the process, preventing him from eliminating the consciousness within the spirit.

It was a combination of mistakes that resulted in this huge farce.

Hall Master Xing fell silent.

He could tell that the other party was earnestly helping him, and it was no one's intention for such a mishap to occur. However... those solutions were truly unacceptable for him.

"Sun shi, let me think over this matter for a while." Hall Master Xing pondered for a moment before abruptly suggesting, "Right, didn't you say that you would like to enter the Trial of Inner Demons to temper your will? Why don't you give it a try now while I ponder over this matter?"

"Hmm?" Zhang Xuan blinked in surprise.

Wasn't that quite a huge leap in thought?

They were just in the midst of discussing how they could save the other party, but the other party suddenly proposed that he try out the Trial of Inner Demons.

"Rest assured, the main goal of the Trial of Inner Demons is to temper one's mind. If you find yourself reaching your limit, you can just admit defeat and leave. As long as you don't push yourself too far, it won't be dangerous!" Taking Zhang Xuan's silence as a sign of apprehension, Hall Master Xing consoled him with a smile.

However, the smile did not seem to have the slightest sincerity within it. Instead, it was so forced that the cactus on his head began shaking, and the fruits were on the verge of falling off.

Zhang Xuan was assessed Hall Master Xing silently for a while before eventually nodding slowly. "I'll give it a try then."

While he had no idea what Hall Master Xing was up to, he did not think that the other party would harm him. At this moment, the other party needed some private space to ponder over the matter and make a decision for himself. Since that was the case, it was indeed a good opportunity for him to challenge the Trial of Inner Demons and temper his will. Perhaps, he might even find some inspiration within and come up with a better way to resolve Hall Master Xing's condition.

"Un. Division Head Liao, open up the Trial of Inner Demons once more!" Hall Master Xing instructed.

"This..." Division Head Liao frowned. A moment later, he slowly nodded. "Alright."

After saying those words, he walked up to the wall and placed his hand on it. A moment later, the passageway surfaced once more.

Directing a nod toward the crowd, Zhang Xuan walked into the passageway, and it did not take long for him to disappear from everyone's sight.

As soon as Zhang Xuan's figure disappeared, Division Head Liao immediately asked, "Hall Master Xing, Sun shi isn't a member of our Combat Master Hall. Why did you let him enter the Trial of Inner Demons? You also know that the greatest heritage of our Heart Division is in there."

The Trial of Inner Demons was a forbidden land even to ordinary combat masters. It was only open to the hall masters and division heads. Contained within it was the greatest heritage of the Heart Division, and Hall Master Xing had actually allowed an outsider to enter. Why?

"Don't worry, the heritage is only attainable upon clearing the entire Trial of Inner Demons. Even someone of my prowess is unable to clear it, let alone a Saint 1-dan cultivator like him," Hall Master Xing replied grimly.

Division Head Liao pondered for a moment before nodding. "Yes, that's true as well."

He had been too caught up in the allowance of Sun shi's admittance into the Trial of Inner Demons, so he had not thought of this point.

Even among the generations of hall masters, only five of them had managed to attain the greatest heritage. Given so, it was nigh impossible for a mere spirit awakener to clear the trial.

"There's no need to worry about the heritage for the time being. You also know our current circumstances; I have to resolve the problem I am plagued with as soon as possible in order to deal with that Xuanxuan Faction, as well as to participate in the Convention of Combat Masters. So... I am planning on allowing his will into my Primordial Spirit!" Hall Master Xing informed the other party grimly.

"You are going to allow him into your Primordial Spirit? Hall Master Xing, I urge you to reconsider!"

Division Heads Liao and Wei were startled, and they hurriedly tried to talk him out of the matter.

Opening one's Primordial Spirit and allowing an outsider to enter was no joking matter. Placing the trust in the wrong person could very well spell death! As the head of the Combat Master Hall, the other party could not take such a risk!

"I have already made up my mind. I understand the dangers very well myself; that's also why I had him enter the Trial of Inner Demons. If he harbors malicious thoughts in his mind, the inner demons that will be bred as a result will be proportionately greater, thus putting him in grave danger. By then, even if I do not make a move, he will be punished by his own evil intents, perhaps facing death even.

"On the other hand, if he has an upright and pure mind, inner demons will be unable to harm him. If it's proven that he's a man of good character, I am willing to take the gamble and entrust my Primordial Spirit to him," Hall Master Xing said.

"This..." The duo mused over what they had just heard.

Inner demons were a manifestation of the negative emotions within one's heart. If that fellow harbored malicious thoughts toward Hall Master Xing, the inner demons would reflect his will, thus putting him through great suffering.

If the other party could traverse within the Trial of Inner Demons safely, it would show that the other party held compassion within his heart. If so, it might be worth taking the gamble for Hall Master Xing to entrust his Primordial Spirit to the other party.

Seeing that the duo was hesitating, Hall Master Xing placed his hands behind his back and said, "Risk is inevitable if one wants to achieve great things. In truth, I don't blame Chen Zhuqing, Yan Qinghai, Lu Wangqiu, and the others for joining the Xuanxuan Faction. On the contrary, I envy them even."

In that moment, he resembled a tenacious cactus in the midst of a desert.

"You envy them?" The two division heads were bewildered by those words.

The division heads' mass defection to the Xuanxuan Faction was no different from snubbing the Combat Master Hall's heritage, soiling its dignity and honor. If they were the hall master, they would have surely exploded at the division heads by now.

"Indeed. The Combat Master Hall is a branch of the Master Teacher Pavilion, and it serves as the military force of mankind. What does a military force require? It goes without saying—strength! As long as it augments our strength, allowing us to fend off the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe and any threats that stand in our way, there are little qualms as to what we are limited to doing as long as we do not overstep our moral bounds. These are the words that our founder left us back then, as well as the motto that we, combat masters, all live by," Hall Master Xing said.

Division Heads Liao and Wei nodded.

The very purpose for the existence of the combat masters was to protect mankind on the frontlines.

As long as it was not against the principles of the Master Teacher Pavilion, they were allowed to do anything in their pursuit for strength. After all, an excessively controlled environment would only stifle one's growth.

Those from the Xuanxuan Faction might be from a vassal nation, but their comprehension of combat had far surpassed their own, reaching an unfathomable level. If studying from the Xuanxuan Faction could grant them greater strength, why should one oppose it?

There was no shame in seeking knowledge from others, no matter how noble or how senior one was—that was an ideal that

Kong shi himself had sought to propagate!

Asking for guidance from a cultivator who was weaker than one was not shameful; on the contrary, it highlighted one's humility and dedication to improving himself, thus giving others a good impression of them. The pros and cons were extremely clear here; the problem lay only in whether one was able to let go of one's pride or not.

"Despite being Primordial Spirit realm experts, they were willing to lower themselves and seek guidance from the Xuanxuan Faction. That displayed their strong thirst for knowledge and power, and that is a good thing! However, as the head of the Combat Master Hall, it is my responsibility to uphold the honor and dignity of the organization, so I have no choice but to stop them so as to not turn our branch into a laughingstock of the world." Hall Master Xing sighed deeply.

"Un." The duo nodded.

After explaining the matter, Hall Master Xing turned his attention back to the passageway and said, "Alright, let's see whether Sun shi harbors malicious thoughts or not. We should be seeing his fox tail 1 soon if he intends to harm me..."

Nodding, Hall Master Liao placed his palm on the wall.

Huala!

The opaque wall transformed into transparent jade.

Noting the look of confusion of Division Head Wei's face, Division Head Liao explained, "This jade wall is able to detect the number of inner demons within. The more malicious thoughts one harbor, the darker the color of the jade wall will become. For one, due to our combat masters dedicating most of our time to furthering our combat skills, their state of mind tends to be much more innocent and purer, so most of them will face less than a dozen inner demons. Previously, when Hall Master Xing entered

the Trial of Inner Demons, he only had three inner demons to deal with, so the wall was nearly transparent...

"Most master teachers also face a dozen or so inner demons at most, and the wall will turn slightly translucent. Only those who harbor malicious thoughts will produce dozens of inner demons, resulting in the color of the jade wall to turn darker!

"Now that Sun shi has just entered the passageway, if the wall remains translucent throughout, it means that he is a righteous person, and we need not worry about him. Hall Master Xing can bare his Primordial Spirit to the other party without any fear..." At this point, a cold glint surfaced in Division Head Liao's eyes. "However, if the wall turns dark, it will be clear that he has malicious thoughts in mind. If so, we should kill the other party as soon as he escapes from the passageway."

"Ah..." Hall Master Xing and Division Head Wei nodded in agreement. Just as they were about to speak, their faces suddenly warped in shock.

The wall before them had been gleaming brightly a moment ago, but in the blink of an eye, it had been dyed completely black.

"The color is so dark! There must be more than a hundred inner demons inside..."

Chapter 1114: Cang Xu's Vengeance

He wasn't the only one who was astonished. Hall Master Xing and Division Head Wei had narrowed their eyes as well, and killing intent could be seen in the depths of their gazes.

Naturally, they had seen those whose minds could dye the wall dark, but this was the first time they had seen the wall being colored to a shade reminiscent of ink!

This was no longer at the level of harboring malicious thoughts. The other party was a huge threat that they had to get rid of by any means!

Who could have thought that despite Sun Qiang's seemingly harmless appearance and earnest attitude, his heart would be so sinister and terrifying?

"It's fortunate that you didn't agree to his demands and had him enter the Trial of Inner Demons first to ascertain his character... I dare not imagine what could have happened if you really agreed to him then!" Division Head Liao exclaimed in cold sweat.

Had Hall Master Xing really agreed to baring his Primordial Spirit to the other party, misfortune would have already befallen him!

"Division Head Liao and Division Head Wei, make preparations. We'll make a move as soon as that fellow leaves the Trial of Inner Demons. We mustn't allow him to get away alive..." Hall Master Xing said as a glint flickered in his eyes.

"Yes!" the two division heads responded resoundingly.

Shortly after Zhang Xuan stepped into the passageway, his surroundings changed so swiftly that it left him feeling as if he had stepped into another dimension.

Countless Night Illumination Pearl gleamed brightly above him, similar to the brilliant noon sun.

It was a sealed room. There was no path forward nor any exit. The walls were filled with all kinds of bizarre inscriptions.

Walking up to take a closer look, Zhang Xuan realized that the inscriptions were actually deformed demons, and there were more than a hundred of them around the room.

These demons were wearing all kinds of items—some were equipped with a golden pole in hand, some were carrying steel whips, and some had a necklace made of human bones. It was quite an eerie and inconceivable sight, and this gave rise to a hint of fear within one's mind.

Am I already in the Trial of Inner Demons? Zhang Xuan frowned.

At the very center of the room was a [zafu](#), which was shrouded by a dense concentration of spiritual energy. It was probably a formation which could be activated.

Perplexed, Zhang Xuan walked up to the zafu and sat down on it.

Weng!

The moment he sat down, a certain mechanism in the room seemed to have been triggered. All of the demons inscribed on the wall suddenly emanated a brilliant glow, and it seemed as if they would tear out of the wall at any moment to tear him apart.

I see... The room establishes a link into the depths of the challenger's heart and produces inner demons accordingly... Sensing the energy harnessed within the ripples of light, Zhang Xuan swiftly came to a realization.

He had imagined the Trial of Inner Demons to be a location filled with formidable inner demons, something similar to what he encountered in the Saint Ascension Ordeal. However, from the looks of it, his initial assumption was off.

The true demons lurked in the depths of one's heart.

It seemed like sitting on the zafu had activated a formation which

induced the birth of inner demons.

I wonder what my inner demons would be like... Zhang Xuan wondered.

Ever since he first started his journey, he had been cultivating the Heaven's Path Divine Art and his path had been relatively smooth-sailing. He had never experienced desperation in relentlessly pushing for a futile breakthrough, nor the despair of being unable to advance forward no matter how hard one worked, so he had never really encountered any inner demon in the midst of his cultivation before... With his opportunity, he wanted to see exactly how fearsome inner demons were, and whether his mind was sufficiently resilient to withstand their temptation.

Weng!

The formations swiftly whirled into action, and the spiritual energy in the surroundings spun into action. The surroundings blurred, and Zhang Xuan found himself plunged within a world of perfect darkness.

It was similar to the situation he had faced when he had encountered his Heart Ordeal previously. Just as Zhang Xuan was scanning his surroundings carefully, bizarre demons suddenly rushed in from the surroundings.

Their forms were similar to the inscriptions he had previously seen on the walls, and there must be at least a few hundred of them around.

"So many? Why would I have so many inner demons?" Zhang Xuan was stunned.

He was still thinking that he shouldn't have much inner demons—after all, wasn't the cultivation technique that he practiced, Heaven's Path Divine Art, supposed to be perfect? Yet, who could have thought that he would end up having to face so many of them simultaneously... If they were to charge at him all at once, would

he be reduced to dust?

"No, something is wrong. If they are truly my inner demons, how could I still be conscious at this point in time?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

Having undergone the Heart Ordeal before, he knew that inner demons had the ability to place one's mind in a befuddled state, thus creating an opening for them to strike... It was perplexing how there were so many inner demons around him, but he was still perfectly conscious.

Just what was going on?

"You're indeed a smart fellow... Indeed, these inner demons aren't yours but mine..."

At this moment, a voice laced with hatred suddenly sounded. Zhang Xuan quickly raised his head and looked over, and he saw an elder with a crimson line in the middle of his glabella walking towards him.

"Who are you?" Zhang Xuan was stunned by the sudden appearance of an intruder.

With a look, he could tell that the other party was a human just like him. But... why would this foreign-looking elder suddenly appear within the Trial of Inner Demons as well?

"You are asking who am I?" the elder's face distorted in rage, and he looked as if smoke would pour out from the top of his head at any moment. "I am the person who was stomped to death by the house you have enchanted, Cang Xu!"

"You are Cang Xu? But... aren't you dead?" Zhang Xuan asked hesitantly.

Cang Xu had already been reduced to a lump of meat by the time he saw the other party, so it was inevitable that he wouldn't recognize the other party's face. Who would have thought that he would meet the other party here? But... why would a dead person

suddenly appear here?

Furthermore, he seemed to have said that all of the inner demons in the area belonged to him. What was going on?

"I was in the midst of using my Primordial Spirit to lay claim to your soul when I was suddenly stomped to death by that building of yours... Due to the link forged between your soul and mine, I was able to conceal a sliver of my will within your body. If you haven't came here, I would have been forced to lay dormant until the day I dissipated, but since you have delivered this opportunity into my hands, I'll have you pay for your actions!" Cang Xu sneered frostily.

Crushed by the massive building of the Spirit Awakener Guild in the midst of executing his secret art, his Primordial Spirit dissipated on the spot. It was fortunate that with the strength of his secret art, he was able to slip a sliver of his will into Zhang Xuan's body and continue existing as an inner demon.

Unless Zhang Xuan were to be forced to face his inner demons during an ordeal or a trial, as an inner demon, he would have been forced to lie dormant, unable to do anything at all. Yet, by a stroke of luck, Zhang Xuan chose to enter the Trial of Inner Demons and activated the formation which triggered one's inner demons. How could he allow such a precious opportunity to slip past his fingers? Thus, he immediately got out and made his move.

As the villain which had tyrannized the Northern Meadows for many years, his hands were stained with the blood of innumerable innocent life. As such, his presence and malicious thoughts swiftly triggered a reaction in the formation, causing several hundred inner demons to appear simultaneously.

"It seems like I have misunderstood the guild building..." Zhang Xuan shook his head.

At this moment, he suddenly recalled that mosquito bite on his soul back when he was in the midst of convincing the guild

building to submit to Guild Leader Ruan and the others. He had shrugged it off back then, thinking that it might just be an imagination on his part. From the looks of it now, it was the working of the old fellow before him.

This would explain the abrupt movements from the guild building's part as well. It was due to its great desire to protect its owner that it had made a move, but he misunderstood the other party's intentions and thought that it was just acting willfully, and he even beat it up over the matter.

Thinking about it, he couldn't help but feel deeply ashamed.

"You tried to claim my soul? You are a soul oracle?" Zhang Xuan noticed a peculiar phrase in the other party's words and asked.

The ability to claim another's soul was a secret art of the soul oracles. Yet, the fellow before him was actually able to execute it... Could he really be a soul oracle?

"I am not a soul oracle, that's a secret art which I have inherited from an old senior... Hmph, you need not try to sound me out, you will be a dead person very soon anyway!"

Roaring furiously, Cang Xu thrust his arm forward. In that instant, an altar appeared beneath him once more. A brilliant gleam of light surrounded Zhang Xuan as it tugged his soul towards the altar, seemingly attempting to consume it.

"This..."

The tug on Zhang Xuan's soul was so weak that he could hardly feel anything. However, the altar that had formed beneath Cang Xu had left him startled.

Without a doubt, that was an altar of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe.

But... Cang Xu was clearly a human, so why would he have such a possession?

"You... betrayed mankind?" Zhang Xuan's face turned cold.

It was inevitable that there would be some humans who would turn to the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe to fulfill their desires. Even You Xu, the previous vice head of the Master Teacher Academy Physician School, had succumbed into his desires for a longer lifespan and chose to come under the command of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, let alone the others.

Cang Xu was definitely a human, but he was using an altar belonging to the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe to execute a secret art which only Otherworldly Demons should have known of—what clearer signs of betrayal could there be other than this?

"Hehe, a smart fellow you indeed are. However, I'm afraid that you won't live to tell the tale!" Sneering coldly, Cang Xu tugged on the light with all of his might, wanting to drag Zhang Xuan's soul into the altar.

Yet, despite his efforts, Zhang Xuan remained firmly rooted to the spot as if a mountain. Even drawing on every last ounce of strength within him, the other party still didn't budge in the slightest.

"Why won't he budge?!" Cang Xu howled in desperation.

He had already claimed many souls with this secret art, and each time, he was able to pull the other party's soul into the altar with relative ease. Yet, why couldn't he move the fellow before him?

"Betraying mankind and learning such demonic arts to harm your own kind, you do deserve to die." Zhang Xuan uttered coldly.

He was still feeling bad that the guild building which he had enchanted had ended up crushing the other party to death, but from the looks of it, it seemed like it was a blessing in disguise after all.

Zhang Xuan was a peaceful person, but against those who had betrayed their own brethren, he wouldn't hesitate to make the

killing blow.

For such a person, he had actually pummeled the innocent guild building... It seemed like he would have to apologize to the guild building after this matter was over.

"Move! Move! Why won't you move!"

While Zhang Xuan was deep in thoughts, Cang Xu was still tugging with all his might, to the point where veins had popped on his head and he was about to suffocate from breathlessness, but his efforts were not showing any results.

If only he still retained his strength as a Primordial Spirit, he would have long rushed over and killed the other party himself. He wouldn't have to go through so much trouble.

"Have you had enough yet?" Seeing how that fellow was still tugging at his soul relentlessly, Zhang Xuan frowned in displeasure.

You just can't give it a rest, can't you?

Just because I left you to do as you please for a while, you thought that I was a person whom you can climb over easily?

"Die! You brat, die!" Cang Xu roared furiously.

"You said that you want my soul, right? Sure, I'll draw out my soul for you then." Zhang Xuan said with a chilling smile.

Hu la!

A ten-meters large soul leaped out from Zhang Xuan's body and flew in the direction of where Cang Xu was tugging towards.

Paji!

The massive soul crushed down on Cang Xu's body, causing the weakened inner demon to be flattened into a pancake, just like how his physical body was crushed by the guild building back then.

At the same time, the altar also shattered to innumerable pieces

under Zhang Xuan's bottom.

In the first place, the altar had been fueled by Cang Xu's soul. Given that Cang Xu retained barely a sliver of the strength he originally wielded, it was inevitable that the altar wouldn't be able to withstand the weight of Zhang Xuan's soul.

The crushed Cang Xu didn't dissipate immediately this time around. Instead, he muttered indignantly, "Why? Why wouldn't it work..."

His body and Primordial Spirit had been destroyed under the weight of the guild building, and it wasn't easy for him to slip a sliver of his will into his mortal enemy's body in the form of an inner demon. He thought that at the very least, he would be able to exact his vengeance.

Finally, an opportunity was presented right to him, but he ironically ended up suffering the same fate as he did previously...

Just what kind of monster have I got myself tangled with...

"It's still too early for you to cry. Now that you're an inner demon, you still have long days ahead of you..." Zhang Xuan uttered coldly.

An inner demon existed in a form similar to a soul. Unless Zhang Xuan were to execute his soul arts against it, it wouldn't dissipate that easily.

However, it seemed like Zhang Xuan's words had ended up sparking something within Cang Xu's mind instead. A cold smile crept onto his lips, and he roared, "You're right. I am an inner demon now, why should I fear you? Everyone, kill him together!"

He was the one he had produced all of the inner demons, and through his secret art, he was able to control all of the inner demons as well. As long as they were to make a move together, he would surely be able to kill that monster before him and exact his vengeance!

"Hm?"

Zhang Xuan frowned as he watched the inner demons slowly heading towards him. Even he would have difficulties dealing with several hundred inner demons simultaneously. However, at this moment, a voice sounded, "Master, that technique of using an altar as a medium to claim souls... it seems to be a secret art which I have created!"

Zafu refers to the round cushion that monks often sit on while meditating and conducting rituals.

Chapter 1115: Taming the Inner Demons

The one who spoke was Vicious.

"You were the one who created the secret art?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

"That's right. The secret art serves to claim the souls and Primordial Spirits of other cultivators to nourish one's soul 1 ." Vicious replied.

"Nourish? Wait a moment... Do you mean that the person whom Cang Xu has submitted to is... another body part of yours?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

"That does appear to be the case." Vicious replied.

In a battle against Kong shi many years ago, Vicious was killed, and his corpse was reduced into numerous pieces.

However, his cultivation had already achieved a level where he could revive just from a single droplet of blood. As long as he had sufficient time and the conditions were right, he could regain consciousness and come back to life. This was what had happened to his heart and phalange back then.

However, there was a drawback to that technique. Every single body part that regained consciousness viewed itself as the original Vicious, and it sought to devour the others so as to return back to its full strength.

Zhang Xuan had promised to help Vicious find back his other parts, but who would have thought that the person who Cang Xu had submitted to would be another one of his body part!

"Master, if I can devour that body part which he has submitted to, my cultivation will surely rise by leaps and bounds..." Vicious said in agitation.

"Alright, I'll conduct a Soul Search on him to gather some

information." Zhang Xuan nodded.

This Vicious had already submitted to him, so it would be beneficial to him if the other party were to raise his cultivation.

His interaction with Vicious had happened in the mind, and it only lasted for an instant. In this moment, the inner demons were still rushing towards him under Cang Xu's command.

The assault of inner demons differed from that of humans. Instead of executing techniques and exerting strength, they would attempt to infiltrate into one's mind through producing all kinds of illusions, gradually eroding one's mental resilience before overwhelming one's consciousness.

Weng!

The assault of the inner demons left Zhang Xuan suddenly feeling a little light-headed.

As Cang Xu was a Primordial Spirit pinnacle expert, his inner demons possessed power proportionate to his original cultivation realm 2 . On top of that, there were simply too many of them. Even with mental resilience of Zhang Xuan's caliber, it was still difficult for him to withstand their simultaneous onslaught.

"Hold it for a moment!" Zhang Xuan roared.

He knew that he would in a vulnerable position once the inner demons were to breach his mind. Thus, driving the Heaven's Path Soul Art to toughen his defenses, he bellowed, "You are Cang Xu's inner demons, so why are you going for me?"

These inner demons were all drawn out from Cang Xu's malicious thoughts, so why would they go for him instead?

"Why would we go for a disgusting brethren when there's a delicious soul right before us?"

"I know that you want to achieve higher realms in your cultivation and advance your ranking as a master teacher. As long

as you listen to me, the goal will be just within reach!"

"Haven't you realized that there's a flaw in your state of mind? Trust me, and I'll supplement your deficiency!"

...

All kinds of lies were spouted from the mouths of the inner demons. Their words carried a beguiling quality to it which seemed to draw one into a trance, making one lose sight of oneself.

"Can't you come up with something other than that?" Zhang Xuan shook his head.

Initially, he was still a little overwhelmed by the combined might of the inner demons. However, upon hearing those inner demons saying that there was a flaw in his cultivation technique and his state of mind, he immediately became more awake than ever.

The Heaven's Path cultivation techniques were compiled by the Library of Heaven's Path, and they were perfect in and of themselves... A flaw in them? You must be joking!

I am one who has cultivated the Heaven's Path cultivation techniques, so for you to teach me... Who do you think you are?

Honestly, don't you think that the quality of your beguilement is a little too low for inner demons?

"I don't know where your inner demons came from, but are you really content with living your life in such a manner? Hiding in the corners of one's heart, not daring to appear in the open... Do you really have no dreams of becoming stronger and making your mark on the world?" Zhang Xuan asked with an alluring tone.

"Ah?"

The inner demons halted what they were doing, and they glanced at one another in bewilderment.

They were in the midst of beguiling the other party, so how did it turn into a situation where the other party attempted to beguile

them instead?

Shouldn't the other party fall into a trance under their suggestions and begin doubting himself, causing his mental resilience collapse and his mind to pass out, thus opening an opportunity for them to overwhelm him?

So how... How could he remain perfectly conscious, and from the looks of it, the other party seemed to be even stronger than them!

Furthermore... they found themselves a little moved by the other party's words!

"In order to cultivate one's soul, one must first stand against the Five Soul Declines. As lifeforms reminiscent of souls, the same applies to inner demons as well. I have a cultivation technique here which might help you if you were to cultivate it diligently." Seeing that the inner demons were at a loss, Zhang Xuan pushed on.

In an instant, flowers began falling from the sky as the spiritual energy in the surroundings resonated in excitement. The inner demons felt as if as long as they were to cultivate according to his teachings, they would be able to surpass their limits and become stronger than ever.

"Inner demons are born by the evil within one's heart. If one's heart is pure, there would be no place for the existence of an inner demon. What a tragedy this is! The basis of your existence is actually centered around a cultivator's whims, and you don't even have control over your own fate... Don't you feel frustrated and helpless? But worry not! As long as you were to cultivate the technique that I impart you, you will be able to grasp hold of your own fate and become the master of yourself!" Zhang Xuan continued on.

The inner demons, who were still hesitating a moment ago, clenched their fists tightly together in agitation, and their faces flushed crimson.

The prowess from the Impartation of Heaven's Will used alongside a demonic tune was simply too great, such that even the inner demons ended up succumbing to it.

"Don't fret, don't hesitate, trust yourself. You will definitely be able to do it. Why should you live such a bitter and difficult life? Heed my words, and gain the strength to dictate your lives!" Zhang Xuan said impassionately as he reached out a hand to them.

Huala!

The agitated inner demons immediately flew over to grasp Zhang Xuan's hand.

In that moment, Zhang Xuan swiftly flicked his wrist and took out a jade bottle. With a simple beckoning, he collected all of the inner demons into the jade bottle.

"Will they really be unable to escape from here?" Zhang Xuan asked as he grasped the shaking jade bottle tightly in worry.

Based on his prior experience, as long as he didn't fall for the inner demons' beguilement, the inner demons would dissipate on their own accord. However, Vicious told him that those fellows could be collected for his own use. This was also the reason why he went through so much effort, using the Impartation of Heaven's Will and his demonic tunes in order to convince them to submit to him.

"As long as you use the altar you have obtained from the Jadeleaf King to stopple the lid, they won't be able to flee. When you need to use them, just uncork the lid. Trust me, they might just prove to be a valuable asset in unexpected situations..." Vicious said.

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded.

With a flick of his wrist, he took out the altar which the Jadeleaf King used previously, and with a light tap, a unique seal covered the entire altar. Following which, the massive altar began to shrink, until it was able to fit nicely on top of the jade bottle as a

cork.

As soon as the altar fell on the cork, the bottle suddenly stopped altogether. It was as if the inner demons had been suppressed within.

Having reaching Saint realm, Zhang Xuan's zhenqi had obtained some new abilities. In the past, it would have been difficult for him to morph his body to be bigger or smaller than how it was, but this wasn't a problem anymore.

This was also the reason why the Byzantium Helios Beast was able to increase his size readily to ferry more people on top of him back then.

"Y-you..." Cang Xu stared at the sight before him in horror.

He thought that with so many inner demons assaulting the young man at once, it should be a walk in the park to take him down. Yet, who could have thought that in the blink of an eye, all of the inner demons would end up betraying him, submitting to the young man instead... Cang Xu's body trembled in fear, and he felt so shocked that he felt as if his mind was going to snap.

Soul Search!

Soul Search was a convenient technique, but it had severe limitations as well. It was unlikely to work on those who were too much stronger than him and the mentally resilient.

Given the current state Cang Xu was in, Zhang Xuan knew that this was the ideal opportunity to strike. Thus, he swiftly grasped Cang Xu and utilized the soul art on him.

This soul art was highly damaging on the victim's soul, but considering that Cang Xu had already defected to the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe and even attempted to kill him, there was no punishment that he was undeserving of.

Tzzzzzzzz!

In the blink of an eye, he had completed a Soul Search on Cang Xu.

As Cang Xu had already been severely weakened in the first place—only a mere sliver of his original soul remained—he was unable to withstand the tremendous pressure of the Soul Search and dissipated instantaneously, disappearing without a trace.

The Marshlands of the Northern Meadows City... After completing the Soul Search, Zhang Xuan managed to find the fellow who had imparted the secret art to Cang Xu.

At the very start, Cang Xu and Dao Kou were just two petty thieves. On one occasion, while fleeing from their enemies, they dived into the marshlands. Just as they thought that they were going to lose their lives, they stumbled upon a peculiar cavern and obtained the heritage contained within.

They had no idea who had left behind the heritage, but they had found themselves getting into a soul contract with the owner of the heritage, which forced them to tribute a soul into the altar once every few days.

And of all souls, the ones that were preferred were those of master teachers.

Over the years, countless master teachers had died in Cang Xu's hands. This was also the reason why he didn't hesitate for too long before deciding to make a move on Zhang Xuan, even when he had guessed that Zhang Xuan was likely to be no ordinary master teacher.

I'll have to look into it in the future... Zhang Xuan thought as he placed those thoughts aside for the moment.

Returning his soul back into his physical body, he opened his eyes once more. At this moment, there were no more inner demons before him, and the pitch-black world from before had vanished. He found himself sitting on a zafu in a room brilliantly-

lit by Night Illumination Pearls.

It was as if what had happened to him previously was only a dream, and it had left him slightly dazed for a moment.

Lowering his gaze, he saw that there was indeed a jade bottle in his hands, and he muttered, "It seems like it wasn't a dream after all. I really managed to take down those inner demons..."

Zhang Xuan smiled.

He could feel the items that were sealed within the jade bottle, and that reaffirmed that everything that had happened was true.

Let me see if there are any changes in my state of mind...

Previously, when Zhang Xuan took down a single inner demon while undergoing the Heart Ordeal, his Soul Depth had surged from 21.1 to 23.1. This time, given that he had taken down several hundred inner demons, surely his Soul Depth would surge to an unbelievable level!

He quickly whipped out a Stone of Insight to test his Soul Depth, and upon taking a look, his mouth began twitching wildly.

"How could this be?" Zhang Xuan muttered in shock

His Soul Depth was still the same as before, 23.1. There was no change whatsoever!

It was as if his previous encounter with the inner demons had done nothing to temper his mind!

"Master, those inner demons aren't yours, so even if you were to successfully beguile them, it won't temper your state of mind in any way... Given so, it's normal for your Soul Depth to remain stagnant!" Knowing what was going through Zhang Xuan's mind, Vicious explained telepathically.

"I see..." Zhang Xuan replied sorrowfully.

Why did other people have so many inner demons while he had none at all?

How could the world be so unfair? He should be given a chance to temper his state of mind as well!

Ah, being too strong had its own troubles as well!

Hong long!

While Zhang Xuan was lamenting his own plight, the wall in front of him suddenly parted, revealing a passageway forward. It seemed like him clearing the Trial of Inner Demons had triggered some kind of mechanism.

Putting away his woes, Zhang Xuan stood up and assessed the passageway warily. After confirming that it was safe, he slowly made his way into it.

The end of the passageway led to another sealed room, and there was a round and smooth crystal ball at the very center of the room.

Zhang Xuan placed his palm on it, and a brilliant gleam of light shot up, revealing a figure.

The figure was an old man with snowy beard and hair. It was a little difficult to discern his age from his appearance.

"The fact that you are able to come here means that you have cleared the Trial of Inner Demons, and your state of mind has become flawless. With this, you are qualified to inherit my heritage..."

The elder stroked his beard with a smile before continuing on, "I am the founder of the Heart Division. The reason why I founded this division is to temper the hearts of the combat master, and those who have managed to achieve that will be able to inherit the highest secret art of our Heart Division, [Vitreous Heart Tempering Sutra]!"

"Vitreous Heart Tempering Sutra?"

"That's right. Upon reaching Major Accomplishment in this technique, one's heart would be unblemished like a transparent

glass, leaving one impervious to the temptations of the inner demons. At the same time, one's Primordial Spirit would also become more wholesome, thus enhancing one's strength!"

The elder smiled meaningfully at Zhang Xuan for a moment before continuing, "Only the greatest of geniuses who are able to withstand the Formation of Inner Demons are qualified to heart this technique. Since you are able to come here, this means that you have already met the minimum qualifications. How about it? Are you interested in learning the technique?"

"No." Zhang Xuan replied without the slightest hesitation.

"..." The elder

Chapter 1116: Altering the Sutra

Those who were qualified to challenge and overcome the Trial of Inner Demons, in terms standing and strength, were all the upper echelons of the Combat Master Hall. There was only one motive for them to do so—to obtain the Vitreous Heart Tempering Sutra... He was only asking the other party whether he was interested out of politeness—naturally, there should only be one answer. Yet, who could have thought that... the other party would actually reply curtly with a 'no'!

If you aren't interested, what the hell are you doing here?

Playing with me?

"This is the highest secret art of the Heart Division... Are you certain that you don't want to learn it?" the elder asked hesitantly.

"I'm not interested." Zhang Xuan shook his head.

He had no inner demon at the moment, and that secret art, upon reaching Major Accomplishment, only served to reduce the number of inner demons. A secret art which performed poorer than him... Unless he was off his rockers, there was no way he should learn that technique!

"Then... why did you challenge the trial?" the elder was displeased.

"I thought that there are inner demons here to temper my state of mind, so I came here to train. Yet... who could have thought that the inner demons here are too weak, it's completely useless to me. I ended up getting excited over nothing... To tell you the truth, I am really disappointed!" Zhang Xuan sighed deeply.

If he had known that the formation was so weak, he wouldn't have come over and wasted his effort.

The only consolation for it was that he had managed to capture several hundred inner demons and uncover the location of another

one of Vicious's body part, so the trip wasn't a complete waste.

"Too weak? Disappointed?" the elder's face flushed crimson, and he nearly fainted on the spot.

He managed to obtain the Formation of Inner Demons in an ancient domain a very long time ago, and he found that it was capable of drawing out the evil, sorrow, fear, and the various negative emotions within a human and amplify them, causing one to sink into a whirlpool of their own emotions.

Those who were able to overcome it would find their state of minds growing far more resilient than before. And for those who weren't able to overcome it, the formation was set up in a manner to halt before things truly get dangerous, so it wasn't dangerous at all.

As simple as the trial sounded, it was no easy feat to overcome one's inner demons. Of the generations of hall masters, only five had managed to clear the Trial of Inner Demons. Just through this in itself, one could see how difficult the matter of. And yet, that fellow actually said that it was too weak...

And furthermore, his face showed that he was full of disdain towards the matter...

Disdain your head! Are you really here to take the trial or to mock us?

"This Formation of Inner Demons is indeed nothing against true experts. However, your strength is only at Saint 1-dan, and it took you a very long time to clear the formation at that. From that, I think it can be seen that the formation isn't as easy as you put it out to be." the elder said with a displeased look on his face.

It had been around ten minutes from the moment that fellow triggered the formation to the point that he entered this room. As fast as it may be, the fact that he still needed ten minutes to overcome his inner demons meant that the trial wasn't as easy as

he made it out to be.

So, why are you boasting over here? You aren't that great either!

"From the look on your face, it seems like you feel that I am talking big." Zhang Xuan shook his head and sighed. "It's not that I want to criticize you, but this formation of yours is truly unseemly and useless! If you don't believe me, I can point out the errors in it for you right now. Even though the formation is capable of drawing out one's inner demons, it requires one to walk to the center of the formation in order to do so. That's as good as giving the cultivator a hint as to what is going to come, thus giving him an opportunity to mentally prepare himself. At the same time, the cultivator would also realize that the experiences afterward would all be false, and that would severely reduce the effectiveness of the formation. This is the very first problem with it!"

"This..." the elder mused over those words for a moment, but he couldn't find anything to refute them.

That was indeed a flaw of the formation.

But while that was the case, once the inner demons came into play, the cultivator's mind would immediately be sent into disarray. It would be hard for the cultivator to think rationally and remind himself that the experiences he was going through were false by then. Thus, in his view, that couldn't be considered as a major flaw.

But even so, for the other party to notice it shortly after entering the Trial of Inner Demons... Could it be that the trial was truly too easy for him?

"Other than that, the inner demons produced by the formations are too simplistic. They only seek to lay doubts regarding one's cultivation and battle techniques. What if the challenger has absolute confidence in his cultivation and battle techniques? If so, the trial would effectively be rendered meaningless... This is the second problem!" Zhang Xuan continued.

"You..." the body of the elder stiffened.

In the first place, the Formation of Inner Demons was not easy to set up, so it was normal for it to be flawed. But even so, finding them shouldn't have been easy when one was in a befuddled state under the work of the inner demons, so how could this fellow still have the attention to look out for flaws?

Was this for real?

"Besides that, the entire location reeks of a formation! The forms of the inner demons are too distasteful, who in the world would want to deal with those inner demons in their right mind? They would probably crack open their heads as soon as they get a chance to do so! Don't you think that the effect would be far greater if the inner demons were to transform into someone they were familiar with? And this is the third problem of the formation!"

"... This is the fourth problem of the formation!"

"... This is the fifth problem of the formation!"

...

"... And this is the tenth problem of the formation! In the first place, this formation isn't too large or powerful, so don't you think that it's unacceptable for there to be so many flaws in it?"

Placing his hands behind his back, Zhang Xuan complained in dissatisfaction.

The formation was indeed capable of drawing out the inner demons within one, making it extremely hard to guard against it. However, the flaws were apparent as well.

To summarize it simply, it simply wasn't immersive!

For the inner demons to appear in the form of demons, wasn't this as good as telling others that 'I am a demon, guard against me'?

As a customer, he found the experience too non-immersive and

lacking.

A truly fearsome inner demon would one which could warp into a being which evoked one's remembrance or deepest regret, rendering one incapable or reluctant to tell the difference between the two... That would be truly fearsome then!

For one, if those inner demons had chosen to assume Luo Ruoxin's form instead of those ugly appearances they had, there was a very small chance that he might have just succumbed to it.

"T-this..." the elder's face paled.

In the first place, he was only a fragmented soul left behind a very long time ago. Suffering these consecutive shocks had left his existence wavering uncontrollably, and it looked as if he was only a step away from dissipation.

As the one who had set up the formation, it was natural that he was well aware of its flaws. He knew that all ten of the flaws pointed out by the other party had no mistakes whatsoever!

In other words, in the short span of time which the other party had cleared the formation, he had also managed to see through the very essence of it.

That would explain why he took ten minutes... It seemed like he spent most of the time analyzing the formation instead of dealing with the inner demons.

But still, to be able to uncover so much within such a short period of time... Wasn't his eye of discernment a little too formidable?

"Then... is there any way that I can resolve the issue?" Knowing that he mustn't look down on the person standing before him, the elder asked carefully.

"It would be very difficult to resolve all of the flaws of the formation. However, I do know of one good way to raise its prowess by a little... As long as we stack an Illusory Formation on top of your Formation of Inner Demons, we would be able to

hinder the challenger from noticing anything before the inner demons are triggered, and this would deprive them of the opportunity to prepare themselves. This should enhance the effectiveness of the formation significantly."

After saying those words, Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment before drawing a picture identical to that in the previous room with his zhenqi.

Tapping on the picture, several hundred light points emerged within the picture of the room.

This was one of the abilities of a painter, Suspended Imagery!

"As long as we plant flags in these points, we should be able to build an Illusory Formation on top of the original formation and enhance its potency..." Zhang Xuan explained calmly.

His comprehension of formations had already reached 7-star pinnacle, putting him at a level comparable to 8-star primary formation masters. On top of that, his experiences at the Qiu Wu Palace had given a far deeper insight into formations as well. Thus, as complicated as compounding two formations together was, it wasn't an issue to him.

Besides, his aim was only to improve a small aspect of the Formation of Inner Demons, so the Illusory Formation didn't have to be too complicated.

"This..."

As one who had set up the Formation of Inner Demons, the elder's comprehension of formation had also reached an incredibly profound level. With just a look, his body jolted, and disbelief crept into the depths of his eyes.

At first sight, the formation seemed haphazard, disobeying the conventions of formation building. It looked as if something an amateur had randomly come up with. However, at closer examination, he realized that it was perfectly calculated to

complement as many flaws in the Formation of Inner Demons as it could, enhancing the prowess of the latter immensely.

"I have benefited under your guidance..." the elder bowed deeply and respectfully.

His previous doubts had vanished without a trace, and in this moment, all he was left with was admiration for the latter.

As young as the person before him was, his comprehension of formation had already achieved a level far beyond what he had achieved in his lifetime. On top of that, he possessed an incredibly resilient mind which not even the Formation of Inner Demons could faze. Who could have thought that he would encounter such an astounding genius after he had passed away?

"There's no need to stand on ceremony!" Zhang Xuan waved his hand calmly.

He was just feeling a little frustrated over how poorly the formation was designed, so he casually pointed it out. Since the other party accepted his views, there was no need for him to push his point insistently and embarrass the other party.

"This is the manual for the Vitreous Heart Tempering Sutra. Even if you are uninterested in it, I still have to abide by my own rules and hand it over to you..."

The elder tapped his finger, and within a shimmering bundle of light, a manual materialized into existence.

Taking a glance at it, Zhang Xuan collected it into the Library of Heaven's Path. Following which, he picked up the book to take a look while in truth, he was browsing through the content of the book in his mind. Before long, he frowned, "This secret art has an extremely high requirement on one's state of mind!"

The Vitreous Heart Tempering Sutra demanded its cultivator to possess an extremely resilient mind, or else, not only would one fail to master it, it might even introduce inner demons into one's

mind, causing one's cultivation to go berserk and decline drastically. In the worst case scenario, one might even lose his sense of self and go berserk.

There were simply too few people in the world who possessed sufficiently strong mental resilience to cultivate the secret art. It was no wonder why one had to clear the trial first before one could inherit the heritage! Otherwise, if those who were not sufficiently capable were to obtain it, it might end up ruining their future instead!

"That's right." the elder nodded.

"It would be hard to commonize a secret art that demands such a high mental resilience of the cultivator... Why don't I take a look at it and alter it so that normal cultivators will be able to practice it safely as well?" Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment before asking.

If it had been any other secret art, he would probably be helpless before it. However, it was a different case for this heart sutra.

The crux of the Vitreous Heart Tempering Sutra lay in cultivating one's Primordial Spirit or soul to becoming wholesome. There was an uncanny resemblance between it and the method how spirit awakeners nourished Primordial Spirits and souls.

He had noticed it while he was browsing through the technique, so he fused it together with the spirit awakeners' spirit enchantment techniques. Even though he failed to create a Heaven's Path cultivation technique out of it, he did manage to overcome the requirement that demanded a high mental resilience from the cultivator.

In a sense, he had managed to resolve the greatest flaw of the technique.

"Alter it so that... normal cultivators will be able to practice it safely as well?"

Back then, he had endured much suffering in order to obtain this

secret art. His goal was simple—he only wanted to raise the strength of the combat masters.

But after obtaining it, he realized that due to the sheer complexity of the technique, only those who possessed high mental resilience were able to cultivate it. This had been one of the greatest regrets in life.

If the Vitreous Heart Tempering Sutra could really be made commonplace, the overall strength of the Combat Master Hall could really be raised by leaps and bounds!

That would also mean a greater degree of safety for mankind as well.

"The greatest flaw in the cultivation technique lay in its cultivation process. Cultivators of the technique will have to face all kinds of temptations, and those who fail to overcome it will meet with disastrous outcomes. It is for this reason that the threshold for the technique is extremely high. In truth, it's not too difficult to resolve the problem. While I was browsing through the manual earlier, I have altered the portions concerning it accordingly." Zhang Xuan said.

"You have altered it while you were browsing through it for the first time?"

When he heard that the other party would alter the technique and make it commonplace, he had imagined that the process would take decades or even centuries easily. Yet, it had only been half a minute since he had taken out the cultivation technique, and not only did the other party manage to finish browsing through it, he had even successfully altered it at that... The elder's body trembled in shock, unable to believe what he had just heard.

That had been his goal while he was alive as well, but despite devoting his entire life to it, he still didn't manage to succeed even when he was on his deathbed... Yet, within a period of time where it wouldn't suffice for anyone else to finish browsing through and

internalize the manual, he had already finished altering the technique...

Even the great Kong shi couldn't have wielded such capability!

"Un!" Zhang Xuan replied with an amiable smile. "Do you want a copy? I can write one down for you now!"

Chapter 1117: Danger! Danger!

"I'll be troubling you then." The elder clasped his fist and bowed.

Even though the young man had shown capabilities that far exceeded common geniuses, he still found it hard to believe that the other party could alter the Vitreous Heart Tempering Sutra within such a short period of time.

He had to confirm it with his own eyes.

Having guessed the elder's thoughts, Zhang Xuan waved his hand, and line after line of words formed out of zhenqi slowly appeared in the air.

It was the altered Vitreous Heart Tempering Sutra!

"T-this..."

Upon taking a look, the elder's body stiffened as incredulity crept into his gaze. "With this alteration, the temptations will still appear, but in a progressive manner instead. This will allow those with a weaker state of mind to cultivate the secret art and slowly advance their proficiency..."

He had studied the Vitreous Heart Tempering Sutra for many years, so he knew it inside out. The other party had not altered much of the sutra, but he had managed to change it from its very foundations.

The prowess upon reaching Major Accomplishment had not changed, but the starting point had been lowered instead.

In the past, even the head of the Combat Master Hall would have difficulties cultivating the technique, but now... even an ordinary Ten Men Commander could probably grasp it with ease.

Seeing the elder trembling in agitation, Zhang Xuan smiled.

Admittedly, the Vitreous Heart Tempering Sutra was a hard-to-come-by technique. While it was not of much use to him, he could

still impart it to Wang Ying and Liu Yang. It should complement the weaknesses in their state of mind, allowing them to reach even greater heights.

More than that, if all combat masters could cultivate the technique, the overall fighting prowess of the Combat Master Hall could be brought to greater heights.

The events in Qiu Wu Palace had given him deeper respect toward master teachers. This was also why he had accepted Hall Master Xing's request readily.

The elder bowed deeply. "Allow me to thank you on behalf of the entire Combat Master Hall!"

"You are being too polite. We are all master teachers, so it's only right for us to help one another!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

The elder had passed away many years ago, but he had chosen to leave behind his will to pass down his secret art, all in hopes that mankind could strive for greatness. His concern for the future of mankind was truly worthy of respect.

Zhang Xuan's response made the elder nod in approval. Curious, he asked, "Considering your incredible mental resilience, I guess that you must be the newly-elected head of the Heart Division?"

"I'm not..." Zhang Xuan shook his head.

He was only dropping by the Combat Master Hall to help Hall Master Xing. He was not even a combat master, so how could he be a division head?

The elder was taken aback for a moment before realization struck him. "You aren't? Oh, I get it! Your strength must have been a factor limiting you from becoming a division head. After all, the minimum requirement is Primordial Spirit realm while you are only at Saint 1-dan pinnacle."

Naturally, there was a requirement on one's cultivation before one could be qualified to become a division head.

If they were to just go by the young man's mental resilience, he was definitely the best candidate to become the head of the Heart Division. However, it seemed like his cultivation had hindered him.

Upon 'understanding' what was going on, the elder said, "How about this then? As the founder of the Heart Division, I wield the ultimate control over the Heart Division. I'll give this to you as compensation for resolving my greatest regret. This way, once your cultivation reaches the mark, you'll automatically become the head of the Heart Division. Not even the hall master will be able to question the matter."

"Thank you for your concern, but it's fine..." Zhang Xuan shook his head.

He was not even interested in becoming a combat master, let alone the head of some Heart Division. Just as he was in the midst of rejecting the other party, he suddenly felt the elder before him sending a thought into his mind. As the thought fused with his mind, he suddenly found himself with perfect knowledge of all the formations in the Heart Division. With this, he had effectively gained full control over all of them.

"Alright. With this, my job is done here. I will be entrusting the Heart Division to your hands."

The transmission of thought had left the elder's soul fading even more. Even so, there was a satisfied smile on his face.

The reason the elder had persisted for so long was due to his regret in being unable to find a successor whom he was truly satisfied with. Even though the cultivation of the young man before him was a little too low, his capability was truly not one to be underestimated. Under the other party's leadership, he was confident that the Heart Division could be brought to greater heights. With this, he was finally able to put down the baggage in his heart.

"But I..." Seeing the elder's look, Zhang Xuan was deeply conflicted.

While he was still in the midst of finding the words to explain his identity, the elder's soul was visibly growing more and more transparent, and eventually, with a light 'pop', it vanished altogether.

"Jeez!" Seeing that it was already too late for him to say anything, Zhang Xuan shook his head helplessly.

Forget it. I'll just pass on the Vitreous Heart Tempering Sutra to Hall Master Xing and Division Head Liao when I get out and let them deal with the matter. That should be more than enough.

He simply was not interested in becoming a combat master, so he could not possibly become the head of the Heart Division. At the very least, if he could pass on the Vitreous Heart Tempering Sutra to them, they would disseminate it. In a sense, he would be fulfilling the elder's final wishes as well.

Having made up his mind, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. He took one last look around the room, and after confirming that there was really nothing around that he could temper his mind with, he began walking out with a disappointed look on his face.

However, barely after taking a few steps out of the passageway, he suddenly felt a chilling sensation pounding on his heart, and goosebumps rose all over his skin.

Hu!

Trusting his instincts, he immediately executed his Heaven's Path Divine Art, and his figure vanished from the spot. The next moment, the hands of a cactus struck the place where he had been standing, creating a huge depression in his place.

Hong long!

The cactus did not stop there just because he had missed. The following moment, Zhang Xuan felt the air crushing heavily down

on him, threatening to flatten him into a sheet of paper.

Narrowing his eyes, Zhang Xuan unhesitatingly halted in his direction of advance and forcefully leaped into the air.

Paji!

Right after he left the ground, a brilliant ray of light blasted across the area that he had been about to pass by earlier, crushing everything in its path callously. If he had been a second late in responding, he might have lost his life.

Sou!

Before he had chance to catch his breath, the flash of a sword flew across the sky, headed for him.

It seemed as if the assaulter had already calculated the trajectory of his movements. Despite his swift reaction, he was still unable to free himself from the relentless offense of the assaulters.

If the previous two attacks were only to corner him, this attack was definitely a killing blow! The sword qi emanated by the sword covered every single path that he could escape to, leaving him no room to flee at all!

What is going on? Zhang Xuan's complexion turned incredibly awful.

He had never thought that he would be assaulted in the Combat Master Hall!

However, this was no time to be thinking about the matter. If he could not overcome the attack before him, all that would be left of him was a cold, lifeless corpse.

With a threat looming right before him, his mind whirled at great speed. In this moment, he seemed to have entered a unique state of mind. Under the assessment of the Eye of Insight, even the sword before him seemed to have slowed down.

Hu!

In this state of mind, Zhang Xuan found that he was completely composed and rational, and such a state allowed him to make the best decision before him. With a huge gust of wind, he compressed his body tightly together.

Geji geji!

In the blink of an eye, from his initial height of 1.8m, he was compressed into roughly the size of a watermelon.

Putting aside the fact that sword qi had sealed his surroundings, preventing him from dodging at all, even if he had managed to dodge the attack by some chance, there was no knowing if the other party still had some other countermeasures to corner him further. At this rate, it was only a matter of time before he was killed! Since that was the case, he had to retaliate!

Shortly after he compressed his body into a bundle, he felt a cold burst of air flying straight above his head. The sword barely nicked his skin, causing a stinging sensation.

"Break!"

Reverting back to his original form, Zhang Xuan swiftly shot his finger forward.

Huala!

Innumerable bursts of sword qi shot forth from his fingers. They swiftly flew toward the barrier of sword qi ahead of him that had sealed his surroundings, and reminiscent of rain striking down on a banana tree, the clash between the two produced relentless 'ding ding dang dang' sounds.

From the previous few attacks, he could already tell that the other party's strength was far greater than his, at least reaching the level of Primordial Spirit pinnacle. With his current strength, there was no way he could face them head-on. Since that was the case, he would just have to overwhelm them by quantity!

Relentless sword qi stormed forth from his finger and struck the

barrier of sword qi. As powerful as the barrier was, it still swiftly thinned under the relentless attacks before eventually dissipating.

"What?"

This series of actions was completed in the blink of an eye. From the initial escape to retaliation, not even half a breath had passed. The one who had launched the attack clearly had not expected that he would be able to dodge the attack and even retaliate, breaking the barrier of sword qi, and he exclaimed in astonishment.

I have to flee now! Knowing that he was still in a dangerous position, Zhang Xuan leaped forward and dashed as fast as he could out of the room.

"Where do you think you're going?"

A furious bellow sounded, and a massive palm print suddenly came falling down upon Zhang Xuan.

The palm print covered over a dozen square meters with him centered at the middle, thus effectively blocking his path of escape. With the speed that the palm print was heading toward him at, it was nigh impossible for him to escape in time.

His combat sense is too strong. Zhang Xuan's face turned grim.

He had thought that he could make use of the other party's lapse in concentration to flee, but the other party had recovered faster than expected. Furthermore, the other party was even able to come up with an attack that could corner him within the blink of an eye. The other party's combat sense was truly frightening!

Even Wu shi could hardly compare to that.

Zhang Xuan knew that he would be severely injured once he was struck by the palm strike, and in his weakened state, there would be no way for him to escape with his life anymore. Thus, he quickly hastened his footsteps and rushed off as fast as he could.

Huala!

In the blink of an eye, he reached the corner of the hall.

But at the same moment, the palm print had finally reached right above him.

"Break!"

Zhang Xuan tapped his finger upwards.

Weng!

Something seemed to whir into life in the room, and the massive palm print froze in midair, as if a fish frozen within a block of ice.

From the information imparted to him by the elder, he had gained a thorough understanding of the layout and formations within the Heart Division, allowing him to control them easily. From the very start, he knew that it would be hard for him to escape, so his movements were also calculated to head toward the center of the formation so as to activate it.

If someone traced his path of movement from the moment he left the passageway of the trial, they would shockingly notice that it was actually a straight line right toward this point!

In other words, even while dodging those attacks, he was still able to instantaneously find a way to resolve it and continue advancing forward. Considering that he was up against an opponent far stronger than him, this was definitely an incredible feat.

With the formation active, Zhang Xuan was finally able to see the faces of his assailants, and a cold gaze immediately slipped into his eyes.

"Hall Master Xing, Division Head Liao, and Division Head Wei, what are you three trying to do?"

They were the three experts of the Combat Master Hall.

Chapter 1118: Zhang Xuan Crushes the Trio

Zhang Xuan was extremely unhappy.

It was out of goodwill that he had come over to help nourish Hall Master Xing's Primordial Spirit so that the latter could deal with whatever trouble he was facing. It was one thing for them not to compensate him, but they even launched an attack against him on top of that.

If not for his swift reaction, he would have already been dead by now!

Was this how the Combat Master Hall treated their benefactor?

"Y-you..."

While Zhang Xuan was fuming, Hall Master Xing and the others widened their eyes in shock, unable to speak a single word.

Of the three of them, there was one who had reached Half-Leaving Aperture realm while the other two were at Primordial Spirit realm pinnacle. With the three of them attacking in collaboration with one another, even a Saint 5-dan primary stage expert could easily have been taken down if caught off guard.

The young man was only at Saint 1-dan pinnacle, but he had still managed to escape from their encirclement unharmed. The combat sense and reflexes he had displayed had surpassed any one of them there!

And more importantly... he was actually able to control the formations in the Heart Division!

Wasn't only the head of the Heart Division able to control them?

"That should be our question instead! Speak, what is your motive for infiltrating our Combat Master Hall?" After recovering from his shock, Hall Master Liao harrumphed coldly. Flicking his wrist, he took out a token.

The token was the symbol of authority of the Heart Division, and it was also the key to controlling the formations within it.

Huala!

A flash of light burst from the token, and the frozen palm print abruptly shook free from its restraints. With a resounding explosion, it burst forth once more.

"Humph!" Sneering coldly, Division Head Liao was waiting for the palm print to fall upon Zhang Xuan when it suddenly switched direction and headed toward the three of them.

Hong long!

Astonished, the trio hurriedly retreated to dodge the palm strike. The palm print eventually struck the ground, creating a huge depression beneath it. At the same time, innumerable cracks crept across the ground within the room.

Amid an intense gale that burst forth from the palm strike, the fruits on Hall Master Xing's head fell to the ground amid resounding 'plops'.

"Division Head Liao, how in the world are you controlling your formation?"

Cloaked with a layer of dust, Division Head Wei roared furiously. At the same time, he gathered his zhenqi into his clenched fist and sent a powerful punch right toward Zhang Xuan.

The might of the palm burst forth, crushing down in Zhang Xuan's direction.

"Humph!" Zhang Xuan's eyebrows shot up as he stood his ground.

Hu!

Before the punch could connect, it made an abrupt U-turn and returned right back at Division Head Wei himself.

"What?" Shocked, Division Head Wei quickly thrust his palm forward to ward off the might of his punch. Nevertheless, he was

still forced to retreat eight steps, and a numbing sensation engulfed his arm. The impact had also jolted his zhenqi, causing him to sustain some internal injuries.

He had exerted his full might in the previous punch, and it seemed like the formation had further enhanced the strength of the punch before sending it back. With his last moment defense, he inevitably ended up suffering some injuries from the encounter.

Pale-faced, Division Head Wei roared furiously, "Liao Bujin, what the hell are you doing?"

With his eye of discernment, it was apparent that it was the Heart Division's formation that caused his attack to turn against him. Given that Liao Bujin was the head of the Heart Division, it went without saying that he was the one who wielded absolute control over its formations. Yet... why was he helping the enemy instead?

"I have no idea! It is as if... he has obtained higher control rights over the formations than me..." Division Head Liao narrowed his eyes in horror.

The formations in the Heart Division were left behind by the founder of the Heart Division, and its control rights were determined by a strict hierarchy. In fact, the head of the Heart Division was not chosen by nomination, but by whether one was able to control the formations of the Heart Division or not.

Back then, it was because he had bested the other elders in terms of his control over the formations that he had been given the token, thus becoming the head of the Heart Division.

Under normal circumstances, with the token in hand, there should have been no one in the Combat Master Hall who could surpass him in terms of control over the formations, and this included the hall master. So, how could the young man be able to supersede his control so easily? This should have been impossible!

Seeing through the situation, Hall Master Xing turned to Zhang Xuan and asked, "How did you manage to obtain higher control rights over the Heart Division's formations than Division Head Liao?"

However, Zhang Xuan was in no mood to answer their questions at this point. With an incredibly dark face, he said in a chilly tone, "It's under your invitation that I came here to nourish your Primordial Spirit. While some mishap happened in the midst of it, it's due to Division Head Wei abruptly barging into the room despite my warnings beforehand. I'm sure it should be apparent that I bear no ill intentions. Yet, not only did you not reciprocate my favor, you even turned around and assaulted me. Why?"

Zhang Xuan's voice gradually grew colder and colder. As he spoke, he slowly walked step by step down from the sky.

With every step that he took, the pressure that Hall Master Xing and the others felt intensified by a notch. After several steps, they felt as if they were shouldering an entire mountain, causing their legs to tremble uncontrollably. Cold sweat trickled ceaselessly down their faces.

This immense pressure came from the formations of the Heart Division!

Given that the other party was in control of the formations, he could easily kill all of them as long as he willed it to happen!

"**I asked why!**" Zhang Xuan roared once more furiously.

Huala!

Unable to withstand it any longer, the trio collapsed to the ground. A stifling sensation choked them, and blood spurted from their mouths.

Zhang Xuan was truly furious this time around.

He had always acted by the principles that he deeply believed in. He did not think that he was a noble and selfless person, but at the

very least, he had never done anything that went against his conscience. Even though a mishap did happen, it was a fact that he had helped to perfect Hall Master Xing's Primordial Spirit. And yet, these three combat masters had actually made an attempt on his life!

And it was an attempt that was completely devoid of mercy! If it was not for his swift reflexes, he would have been dead already!

He had been trying his best to find a way to resolve Hall Master Xing's condition, and yet, they actually attempted to kill him without rationalizing the situation!

"You are asking why even though you have tried to kill our hall master?" Division Head Liao spat indignantly as he tightened his grip around the token in his hand, wanting to wrestle back control over the formation. However, it was to no avail.

Before the other party, it was as if his token as a mere toy. Putting aside controlling the formation, he found that he was even unable to feel it at all. This was how absolute the other party's control over the formation was.

"Kill your hall master? If I really wanted to kill him, do you think that he would still be alive and kicking now?" Zhang Xuan sneered coldly as he flung his sleeves furiously.

Peng!

A powerful force struck Division Head Liao, and his body crashed heavily into the wall. He was completely helpless before the power of the Heart Division's formation.

In truth, even though Zhang Xuan's cultivation was only at Saint 1-dan, he still could have easily destroyed Hall Master Xing's Primordial Spirit earlier on. There was no need for him to go to such lengths to do it.

As such, when he heard Division Head Liao replying him with such a ridiculous reason, he could not hold back his temper any

longer.

Seeing that his companion was wounded, Division Head Wei clenched his jaws furiously. "With more than a hundred inner demons in your heart, do you honestly expect us to believe that you wanted our hall master to bare his Primordial Spirit out of goodwill?"

Considering how the wall had turned so dark after the other party had entered the Trial of Inner Demons, it was apparent to see that he harbored malicious intentions at heart. No matter how he tried to reason his actions, they were bound to be excuses!

"Inner demons?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

He had not really thought that the trio would attempt to kill him for such a reason.

"So that's why you attacked me?" Zhang Xuan gazed down on them coldly. "Those inner demons aren't mine. I was assaulted by the Sky Bearing Bandit Cang Xu back at the Spirit Awakener Guild, and a sliver of his soul ended up latching onto me. It was his soul that resulted in the congregation of inner demons."

If it had been anyone else, he wouldn't have bothered to waste his words. He would have just pummeled them straight to vent his anger and return some sense back into their heads.

However, he was in the Combat Master Hall, and as the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, his actions were representative of the entire organization. Given that the Xuanxuan Faction was going to have an exchange with the Combat Master Hall very soon, it could prove to be very troublesome later on if he beat up the hall master and two division heads.

The other party might even vent their anger on his students.

Considering that they were in Qingyuan City, the other party's home turf, he had no choice but to hold himself back.

"Cang Xu?" Hall Master Xing and the others were stunned to hear

that name.

He had heard how the fellow was stomped to death by the guild building.

If one had to compile a list of the ten most unforgivable criminals in Qingyuan Empire, that fellow would definitely have been on the list.

"Indeed. I have already killed that fellow and taken down all of the inner demons." Zhang Xuan harrumphed coldly. "If I really have hundreds of inner demons, do you think that I could walk out from the Trial of Inner Demons perfectly fine?"

"This..." The trio froze.

The other party was right. If those inner demons were indeed his, even with the safety measures in the formation, he would still have been driven to a state of near insanity by the simultaneous onslaught of the inner demons!

Considering how the other party was in a completely rational state, capable of making astute judgements in battle and analyzing the situation keenly... it did appear that he was unfazed by the inner demons.

Zhang Xuan gazed down on Hall Master Xing coldly. "Besides, if I really intend you harm, do you think that I would have entered the Trial of Inner Demons just to cause problems for myself?"

"To deal with our hall master, it's natural that you would have to gain our trust first. You could have known of the existence of the Trial of Inner Demons beforehand and made countermeasures against it, only for the countermeasures to fail halfway through the trial," argued Division Head Liao.

If possible, they would not doubt their benefactor either. However, when they thought back about what had happened, everything seemed too coincidental to be true.

Just as they were about to find a powerful spirit awakener, he

suddenly appeared in the Spirit Awakener Guild. It should have only been an ordinary spirit enchantment, but it ended up turning Hall Master Xing into a flowering cactus.

It was not to say that the points raised by the other party did not make sense, but there were still too many doubtful points for them to simply accept it as it was.

It was due to these doubts that they harbored that they were swiftly convinced that the other party was up to no good upon finding out that there were so many inner demons in the other party's heart.

"Alright then. Let's take a step back and not debate whether I would have to win your trust before dealing with your hall master. With just my control over the Heart Division's formations, do you think that anyone will be able to stop me if I attempt to kill the three of you?" Placing his hands behind his back, Zhang Xuan spoke with the utmost arrogance.

So what if they were combat masters?

With the many formations of the Heart Division under his control, he was the sole sovereign within this space!

If he wanted to make a move, he could have easily killed the trio without anyone being any the wiser.

Hearing those words, the trio fell silent.

That was indeed true.

Perhaps the other party might still have needed to resort to schemes beforehand, but with the formations of the Heart Division now under his absolute control, there was no need for him to waste his breath on them.

Seeing that the trio was unable to speak a word, Zhang Xuan continued. "Hall Master Xing, if I'm not mistaken, your Primordial Spirit suffered significant damage in the past, right?"

"That's right... Twenty-five years ago, I fought with an Otherworldly Demon King in the Subterranean Gallery and ended up being wounded by him," Hall Master Xing replied.

There were quite a few people within the Combat Master Hall who were aware of the wounds his Primordial Spirit had suffered. Back then, his injuries were so severe that he had nearly lost his life. He was unconscious for three whole years, and if not for the relentless effort of the old guild leader of the Physician Guild, he might have just passed away back then.

However, it was a pity that the old guild leader suddenly went missing after saving him, leaving him unable to repay the other party's favor.

That had become a huge regret of his.

Sighing deeply, Zhang Xuan began explaining with a softened tone. "The damage sustained by your Primordial Spirit has ended up leaving behind a huge rift in it. I used my spirit enchantment to help cover up your rift, but Division Head Wei entered at that crucial moment, and your awakening Primordial Spirit ended up ejecting my consciousness from your mind. After which, while you were attacked by the inner demons, the enchanted spirit ended up fusing completely with your Primordial Spirit, thus resulting in that weird form of yours. It's indeed my fault for not explaining things to you earlier, but it was definitely not my intention to harm you."

"This..." Hall Master Xing's face paled.

He had felt his Primordial Spirit becoming much more wholesome than before, but as he had not done a thorough check, he didn't notice that the rift had been healed. Upon hearing Zhang Xuan's words, he hurriedly looked inwardly to check on his Primordial Spirit, and a moment later, his eyes widened in astonishment and delight.

"You treated... the rift in my Primordial Spirit?" Hall Master Xing

asked hoarsely. He could hardly believe what had happened to him.

The huge rift in his Primordial Spirit had become a huge bottleneck for his cultivation. He had sought many formidable physicians due to that matter, but all was helpless before that issue.

Twenty years had passed, and he had already given up hope.

The reason he intended to challenge the Trial of Inner Demons was in hopes that perhaps that highest secret art could repair that wound of his. Although, to be honest, he did not harbor much hope for that either.

He had thought that his cultivation would be capped at this level for his entire life, and never had he thought that the spirit awakener before him would actually successfully repair his Primordial Spirit. How could he have made an attempt on the life of his great benefactor?

Chapter 1119: Zhang Xuan Imparts a Technique

"I have misunderstood you. Please accept my sincerest apologies," Hall Master Xing said as he bowed deeply.

Putting everything aside, if the other party truly intended to kill him, why would he have repaired his Primordial Spirit in the first place? There was no need for him to do so at all.

Furthermore, just as the other party had said, if the other party wanted to kill him, given his control over the formations, he would have just done it. There was no need for him to waste his breath.

To think that he, as the head of the Combat Master Hall, actually tried to kill a man who was earnestly doing his best to help him... A deep feeling of guilt and shame crushed down on his heart, choking him within.

Subconscious bias had influenced his train of thought, and the Trial of Inner Demons had further dulled his judgement. Otherwise, someone of his wits should have been able to figure all of that out.

"After all we have done, we dare not ask for Sun shi's forgiveness. We only hope that you will give us an opportunity to compensate you. No matter what it is, we will definitely have it done without the slightest complaint!" Hall Master Xing implored.

They were at fault for this matter, and no matter what, they had to clear things up. Putting aside the fact that this matter would bring shame to the Combat Master Hall, they would not even be able to forgive themselves.

"I don't need your compensation. However, if you are willing to trust me, I can resolve your problem right now," Zhang Xuan replied.

He was still angry over the matter, but at the very least, the other party had not done what they did out of ill will against him. Rather than souring the relations with the Combat Master Hall just so that he could vent his emotions, it would be better if he could use this incident to forge a sense of camaraderie between them and the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy instead.

"Of course, I trust Sun shi!" Hearing the other party not asking for compensation and even offering to resolve his problem for him, Hall Master Xing could not help but feel deeply grateful and ashamed at the same time.

This was the magnanimity of a true master teacher!

Compared to him, they seemed like hypocrites instead.

Zhang Xuan nodded. "Alright, I'll need you to lower the defenses around your Primordial Spirit."

"Very well!" Without any hesitation, Hall Master Xing sat down on the ground and bared his Primordial Spirit to the other party without any reservations.

Given that the other party controlled the formations of the Heart Division, there would have been nothing he could do even if the other party meant him harm. Since he was completely helpless, he might as well just completely let go. This way, he would at least be able to salvage the situation a little by displaying his trust in the other party.

Seeing that the other party was cooperating with him obediently, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

It was indeed difficult to deal with a spirit once it had fused with the cultivator's Primordial Spirit. Nevertheless, if he could slip his consciousness into the other party's Primordial Spirit and specifically pinpoint the location of the target, it would not be too difficult to eliminate it.

Hu!

Thus, Zhang Xuan extended his consciousness into Hall Master Xing's Primordial Spirit and began his work. Not too long later, he heaved a sigh of relief.

"Sun shi, how is it?" Division Heads Liao and Wei asked anxiously.

"Take a look for yourself..." Zhang Xuan left them those words and sat down on the ground to recuperate.

The other party's Primordial Spirit was simply too strong, such that he had to exert a lot of energy in order to maneuver his consciousness within it to find the spirit. Even though the process had only taken ten short minutes, it had ended up depleting his soul energy by almost 80%.

Boom!

A while later, a loud buzz suddenly sounded from Hall Master Xing's body, and amid a brilliant glow, a Primordial Spirit suddenly gushed out of his body.

"Leaving Aperture realm..." Division Heads Liao and Wei widened their eyes in disbelief.

Just how long did it take for them to achieve a breakthrough?

Hu!

Returning his Primordial Spirit back to his body, Hall Master Xing opened his eyes once more. He jolted his body, and the cactus on his head and the flower on his bottom fell to the ground before withering to death.

Turning to the young man, he kneeled down in gratitude.

"Thank you, Sun shi!"

His Primordial Spirit had long reached a level far surpassing any other Half-Leaving Aperture realm expert. Were it not for his injury, he would have achieved a breakthrough many years ago. After his trauma was resolved with Zhang Xuan's help, his flow of

power finally became whole again, and with the incredible accumulation of power he had, he was able to achieve a breakthrough easily on the spot.

Of course, while he had managed to draw his Primordial Spirit out from his body, he had not undergone the lightning ordeal yet, so he could not be considered a full-fledged Leaving Aperture realm expert. Nevertheless, he was still many times stronger than before.

He could not help but feel incredibly blessed to have met with Sun shi.

Despite all of the misunderstandings between the both of them, the other party was willing to shrug off the matter magnanimously and treat him. In that moment, he was filled with nothing but admiration for the other party.

"There's no need to stand on ceremony!" Zhang Xuan swiftly helped the other party up.

At that moment, he suddenly recalled a certain matter, and he said, "Previously, after I cleared the Trial of Inner Demons, I met with the founder of the Heart Division!"

"Sun shi met with the founder?"

"But... Despite Cang Xu introducing so many inner demons into the trial, you were still able to successfully clear the trial?"

Everyone leaped in shock. This was especially so for the head of the Heart Division, Division Head Liao. His eyes were widened in disbelief.

Initially, considering that the other party's cultivation was only at Saint 1-dan, he had thought that it was unlikely for him to clear the trial. Furthermore, the other party had said that Cang Xu's Primordial Spirit had drawn in more than a hundred inner demons, and that only further convinced him so.

He had thought that the other party had only managed to get

away unscathed by backing out of the formation through using some unknown method while his mind was rational the moment that the inner demons appeared. But who knew that the other party had managed to clear the trial!

He knew full well how difficult the Trial of Inner Demons was. Of the many generations of hall masters, only five had cleared the trial. Yet, a Saint 1-dan cultivator... had actually managed to clear it. This was too fearsome!

After a moment of shock, Division Head Liao asked, "Did the founder... impart the Vitreous Heart Tempering Sutra to Sun shi?"

"He did." Zhang Xuan nodded before continuing. "Since all of you are around, let me impart the secret art to the rest of you. It should prove to be useful in helping you all temper your state of mind!"

"You want to impart it to us?" Hall Master Xing swiftly shook his head with a bitter smile. "I appreciate Sun shi's kind gesture, but there are fundamental requirements to cultivating that secret art. Until we are able to clear the Trial of Inner Demons with our own ability, we will only hurt ourselves by cultivating the secret art."

They would have loved to cultivate the strongest technique of the Combat Master Hall as well, but it was a pity that they were not strong enough to overcome the temptations of the mind. Even with the secret art right before them, they would not dare touch it. Otherwise, it might just very well cost them their lives.

In the many millenniums of history behind the Combat Master Hall, there had been a handful of combat masters who did not believe in such matters and demanded to learn the Vitreous Heart Tempering Sutra from the hall master, and eventually, their cultivation all ended up going berserk.

It was for this reason that it was eventually firmly sealed behind the Trial of Inner Demons of the Heart Division, becoming one of the forbidden secret arts of the Combat Master Hall.

In truth, they could not help but feel deeply impressed by the young man before them. Despite his young age, he had already attained a state of mind far beyond theirs, and with his own prowess, he had managed to earn the right to cultivate the secret art. They hoped to do the same, too, but it was still impossible for them in their current state.

The dangers concerning the Vitreous Heart Tempering Sutra were in no way exaggerated. Once a cultivator started to cultivate the secret art and fell for its temptation, they would find themselves unable to stop cultivating, and it was a matter of time before disaster struck.

"The secret art did have such a flaw previously, but there's no need to worry about it anymore. You can take a look at it first before deciding on whether you want to cultivate the technique or not!" Zhang Xuan chuckled as he raised his hand. A screen of zhenqi appeared before him, and a string of gleaming words materialized in midair.

"This..." Not expecting the other party to show the secret art to them without any reservations, Hall Master Xing and the others felt a little conflicted.

It might seem as if there was no harm just looking at it, but even they could not guarantee that they would not succumb to the temptation of the technique and cultivate it. But again, as combat masters, avid pursuers of strength, it was extremely difficult for them to turn their eyes away when they knew that a powerful secret art stood before them. Curiosity gnawed at their hearts.

"Forget it! It won't hurt to take a look..." Eventually, the trio failed to withstand the allure of the secret art and began examining the secret art manual in the air.

Perplexed frowns gradually crept onto their faces.

Their eyes of discernment might not have been on par with the founder of the Heart Division, but they were still top-notch experts

of the Combat Master Hall. With their deep experience and knowledge of all kinds of secret arts, it did not take them long to realize that the secret art was a little different from how it had been described to them. Astonishingly, the prerequisite mental resilience to begin cultivating the technique was not high at all. Putting aside them, even ordinary combat masters would be able to practice it without facing any serious danger.

"This..." The trio traded intrigued gazes with one another.

After a long moment of silence, Hall Master Xing asked hesitantly, "Sun shi, are you certain that this is the Vitreous Heart Tempering Sutra?"

"It is." Zhang Xuan nodded.

"But... that secret art can't be cultivated by those who lack mental resilience..." Hall Master Xing muttered in confusion.

"That's right. The secret art did have such an issue when I first obtained it." Zhang Xuan nodded. "I thought that it was a huge flaw, so I casually changed some parts of it. Now, even ordinary cultivators should be able to practice it!"

"You casually changed some parts of it?"

"Sun shi... did you really... alter the Vitreous Heart Tempering Sutra?"

The three combat masters felt the back of their throats turning dry, and their bodies began shaking involuntarily.

The secret art had been around ever since the founding of the Heart Division. If it could be altered that easily, one of the countless geniuses in the long history of the Combat Master Hall would have long done so!

Sun shi had barely been in the Heart Division for twenty minutes... and within this period of time, not only did he deal with the hundred inner demons from Cang Xu, he even inherited the heritage and altered it on a whim.

You must be joking with us! You've got to be!

That is the greatest secret art of the Combat Master Hall!

Is it really possible to change it just like that?

"Indeed. The secret art had simply too many flaws, and more importantly, ordinary cultivators were not even able to cultivate it at that! A flawed technique that ordinary cultivators are unable to practice, is there a reason for such a technique to continue existing in the world?" Zhang Xuan shook his head. "Honestly, I have no idea why the founder of the Heart Division left such a secret art behind!"

To regard a secret art that no one was able to cultivate as its unparalleled treasure, this Combat Master Hall sure was...

Zhang Xuan shook his head. "It's pity that I wasn't able to correct all of the flaws due to my ineptitude. I was only able to lower the prerequisites of the technique such that ordinary cultivators are able to practice it. It's still rather lacking, but I'm afraid that you will have to just make do with it."

He was still lacking books on the aspect of tempering one's mind, so he could only alter it this far for the time being.

Honestly speaking, he could not help but feel a little embarrassed for imparting a technique riddled with flaws to others.

The simplified Heaven's Path techniques that he would usually impart to others might have its flaws as well, but they numbered very few. However, as for this Vitreous Heart Tempering Sutra... he had only altered one of the flaws, and there were still many more within it. If others were to learn that he was the one who had passed this technique over to the Combat Master Hall, he might just die of shame!

"Limits of your knowledge?"

"Make do with it?"

The trio staggered upon hearing those words, and they nearly collapsed to the floor.

Big brother, are you sure you aren't joking with us?

Generation after generation of our predecessors have failed to achieve what you did! If what you have done is considered ineptitude, shouldn't our predecessors have just banged their heads against the walls to repent for their uselessness?

And more importantly... it is such a profound cultivation technique, but why do you keep speaking of it with disdain, as if it is little more than trash?

Noticing the bizarre expressions on the faces of the trio, Zhang Xuan thought that they were worrying about the dangers of cultivating the newly-modified secret art, so he quickly clarified the matter. "Ah, are you afraid that I might have altered it incorrectly? Don't worry, your founder has taken a look at it personally and confirmed that it's fine. It's also for this reason that he passed down the top authority over the formations in the Heart Division to me."

"The founder has taken a look at it as well?"

While the trio was shocked by the news, realization also struck them at the same time.

They had been wondering how the other party had suddenly gained control over the Heart Division's formations just after making a trip into the Trial of Inner Demons. It turned out that the founder had passed his control rights over!

Just that gesture in itself was sufficient to prove that there was no mistake in the other party's alteration. Otherwise, the founder could not have possibly gone to the extent of passing his authority over to a stranger.

To receive the recognition of the founder and gain authority over the Heart Division's formations... Wouldn't that mean that the

time the other party had spent on altering the secret art was far less than twenty minutes?

To be able to alter their highest secret art so quickly... Could it be that Sun shi's greatest strength lay not in spirit enchantment but his comprehension of cultivation techniques?

Chapter 1120: Hall Master Xing's Doubts

"Thank you, Sun shi!"

As shocked as they were, they knew that it wasn't the time to be pondering over this matter. They quickly turned their gazes back to the secret art and began memorizing it.

They understood full well the significance of the lowered prerequisites for the cultivation of the Vitreous Heart Tempering Sutra for the Combat Master Hall.

The other party could have hidden the fact that he had obtained the heritage from them, and no one would have found out about it either. Using the secret art, he could have easily drawn in countless pursuers and form his own influence, thus winning him both power and riches... Alternatively, he could also use the secret art as a leverage to make demands out of them... Considering that it was their highest secret art on the line, they would have no choice but to bow to anything that the other party demanded.

But the other party didn't choose to do so.

In fact, he even tossed it back to them as if it was nothing at all... This magnanimity was something they could never hope to match up to.

It was laughable how they had actually doubted the character of such a noble person...

Their faces reddened in shame, and they would dive into a hole to hide in if there was one beside them in this very instant.

All along, they had thought that given that everyone had their own greed and desires, true selflessness was impossible... However, the young man before them had overturned that belief!

Only a man like him could bear the title of a 'teacher' without any guilt.

"Sun shi, your impartation of the Vitreous Heart Tempering Sutra to our Qingyuan Empire Combat Master Hall makes you a half-teacher to all of us. From now onward, no matter what request you have of us, our Combat Master Hall will surely have it accomplish at all cost!"

After taking several more looks at the Vitreous Heart Tempering Sutra and confirming that it was suitable for everyone to cultivate, Hall Master Xing stepped forward and clasped his fist earnestly.

While this secret art was left behind by the founder of the Heart Division, the young man before him did make a huge alteration to the technique, so it could be said that he had a claim to it as well.

Since they were going to cultivate the other party's technique, that would effectively make the other party their half-teacher.

No matter, the Qingyuan Conferred Empire truly owed the young man a huge debt this time around. This wasn't a debt which could be repaid just by offering a little bit of help here and there.

"Hall Master Xing, there's no need to stand on ceremony!" Not expecting the other party to take the matter so seriously, Zhang Xuan hurriedly waved his hands to indicate that it wasn't a huge issue.

"That can't do! Sun shi, you have truly done our Combat Master Hall a great favor this time around. With the Vitreous Heart Tempering Sutra you have imparted us, the overall fighting prowess of our Combat Master Hall would be raised immensely. With this, we would be able to deal with our current crisis easily!" Hall Master Xing replied earnestly.

There were two reasons why the members of the Combat Master Hall were so easily seduced by the Xuanxuan Faction. Firstly, the Xuanxuan Faction's grasp of combat knowledge was indeed far superior to theirs—even Hall Master Xing had to admit that. Secondly, it would be due to their lacking mental resilience against temptations.

However, with the Vitreous Heart Tempering Sutra being made commonplace, the overall prowess of the combat masters would be enhanced. With this, they might stand a chance in besting the Xuanxuan Faction in the exchange three days from now!

"Indeed. If one were to cultivate the secret art diligently, it'll help them to maintain their clarity of mind, allowing them to withstand the beguilement of the inner demons. At the same time, the enhanced state of mind will also boost one's comprehension of battle techniques and combat. It'll indeed boost the prowess of the combat masters significantly." Zhang Xuan nodded.

At this point, he suddenly recalled a matter and asked, "Right, I have some students who are severely lacking in their mental resilience. Will it be fine for me to impart the secret art to them as well?"

No matter what, the Vitreous Heart Tempering Sutra was still the highest secret art of the Combat Master Hall. He should still seek the other party's permission before imparting it to Wang Ying and the others in the Xuanxuan Faction.

"Of course! Since the founder has imparted the technique to you, and you have also made significant improvements in it, you are free to do anything you want with it!" Hall Master Xing said with a smile.

It wasn't a problem for the technique to be passed down to just a couple of students.

Division Heads Liao and Wei also nodded in agreement.

Such an act wouldn't harm the interests of their Combat Master Hall, so there was no need for them to oppose it.

"Allow me to thank the Combat Master Hall on their behalf then." Zhang Xuan bowed.

Wang Ying, Liu Yang, and the others from the Xuanxuan Faction were still too young. It was inevitable that they would be

disadvantaged in terms of their state of mind against the combat masters. However, if they could cultivate the Vitreous Heart Tempering Sutra, that flaw of theirs could be resolved. At the very least, they wouldn't panic in the midst of battle, and that would give the Xuanxuan Faction a better chance in the battle.

"Sun shi, you are too polite!"

The others quickly clasped their fists respectfully.

After chatting for a while longer, Zhang Xuan suddenly recalled a certain matter, and he asked, "Will it be inconvenient for me to ask what kind of trouble is the Combat Master Hall facing?"

This was the second time he was asking this question.

The other party agreeing to allow him to impart the Vitreous Heart Tempering Sutra to his students and the members of the Xuanxuan Faction was a huge favor to him. For this, he didn't mind helping the other party resolve their problem.

Also, he was also a little curious as to know what kind of problem the Combat Master Hall was facing that would leave even the formidable Hall Master Xing in such a panic.

"I thank Sun shi for your concern, but with this Vitreous Heart Tempering Sutra, I am confident that we should be able to overcome the crisis easily." Hall Master Xing replied with a smile.

The other party had already done them a huge favor by simplifying the Vitreous Heart Tempering Sutra to a level where each and every combat master would be able to cultivate it. If they still couldn't resolve the problem like that, their Combat Master Hall would have no face to continue existing in this world.

"Hall Master Xing..." Right after he had said those words, Division Head Liao suddenly turned to him and discreetly sent a telepathic message over. "Despite possessing only a cultivation of Saint 1-dan pinnacle, Sun shi was able to avoid our collaborative offense without incurring any injuries... His fighting prowess is

truly terrifying! If we could have him to teach our combat masters, the overall prowess of our Comba Master Hall would surely rise swiftly!"

"This..." Hall Master Xing was a little taken aback by the proposal.

He hadn't really thought about it, but the young man before him had achieved an astounding level in his comprehension of combat despite his Saint 1-dan pinnacle cultivation.

Even with his breakthrough to Leaving Aperture realm, it was highly likely that he would be no match for the other party once he suppressed his cultivation to Saint 1-dan pinnacle too.

With his prowess, he was bound to be far stronger than those of the Xuanxuan Faction. If he could step forward to teach their combat masters... It could be foreseen that there would be a significant surge in the prowess of the Combat Master Hall!

By then, it wouldn't be a problem for them to defeat the Xuanxuan Faction and regain their honor.

"It's indeed a good idea, but... our Combat Master Hall is already deeply indebted to the other party. We can't let him do anything for us anymore..." Hall Master Xing replied with a frown.

Division Head Liao's idea was good, but they couldn't just keep accepting the goodwill of the other party without reciprocating.

Besides, for the Combat Master Hall to be unable to deal with an academy from a Tier-1 Empire, forced to the extent of engaging the help of a spirit awakener... How shameful it would be!

"You're right." Understanding Hall Master Xing's point of view, Division Head Liao nodded and fell silent.

On the other hand, hearing Hall Master Xing's confident response, Zhang Xuan nodded, "That's good..."

He knew that it wouldn't be appropriate for him to probe any

further at this point, or else it would as good as casting doubt over the capability of the Combat Master Hall. Thus, he hesitated for a brief moment before continuing, "To tell you the truth, I do have something to ask of you."

"Feel free to speak!" Hall Master Xing replied hurriedly.

"Is it possible for me to access all of the Saint 2-dan and above cultivation technique manuals in your Combat Master Hall? Recently, I have reached a bottleneck in my cultivation, and I need to accrue as much knowledge as possible in order to converge my cultivation together..." Zhang Xuan said.

It had been a month since he had reached Saint 1-dan pinnacle at the Qiu Wu Palace. His physical body, zhenqi, and soul cultivation had already reached their limits long ago, and it was about time for him to achieve a breakthrough.

To be honest, it was deeply embarrassing for him to be stuck at Saint 1-dan pinnacle for such a long period of time.

"Our Combat Master Hall do have cultivation technique manuals of Saint 2-dan and above, but I'm afraid that we don't have too many of them." Hall Master Xing was visibly surprised by Zhang Xuan's request for a moment before nodding.

"There aren't much of them?" Zhang Xuan asked with a deep frown.

Typically speaking, the Master Teacher Pavilion would have a huge collection of cultivation technique manuals numbering in millions so that master teachers could easily access whatever information they required. So, why would Hall Master Xing say that there wasn't much of them?

"Unlike the Master Teacher Pavilion, where master teachers can access all cultivation techniques once their cultivation reaches the required level, combat masters have to overcome certain trials before they can claim any cultivation technique..." Seeing the

incomprehension in Zhang Xuan's eyes, Hall Master Xing explained.

In the Master Teacher Pavilion, as long as one's master teacher rank and cultivation realm reached the required level, or if they were to accrue sufficient Contribution Points, they would be granted access to the cultivation techniques correspondingly. However, the Combat Master Hall didn't obey by the same rules.

Combat masters were expected to wield fighting prowess at the apex of humanity, so they had to temper their strength to the very limits of their cultivation realm and prove it so through clearing a trial would they be able to obtain the cultivation technique manuals for the next realm.

Otherwise, if one failed to reinforce their cultivation sufficiently at a certain realm, their subsequent cultivation would become unstable. This meant that they would no longer be able to retain their strength of being at the apex of their cultivation realm, and it could also hinder them from reaching greater heights in their cultivation as well.

"As our Combat Master Hall is born for the sole purpose of combat, combat masters would cultivate the same cultivation technique as one another so as to make it more convenient for them to collaborate with one another in combat or amalgamate their zhenqi together to generate a force far beyond their individual limits... Thus, the quantity of cultivation technique manuals that we have here is much fewer than that in the Master Teacher Pavilion!" Hall Master Xing explained.

Zhang Xuan nodded in realization.

The Combat Master Hall was effectively the army of the Master Teacher Pavilion, so naturally, their cultivation techniques would be geared towards maximizing their prowess, especially through teamwork. For this purpose, it was necessary for them to cultivate specific cultivation techniques so that they could better aid and

complement one another in battle.

"Of course, even though our cultivation technique manuals number few, I can assure their guarantee. They should prove to be a great source of inspiration to you. Besides, even though I did say their quantity is limited, we still do have a few hundreds of them here to cater to those of differing constitutions!"

Hall Master Xing didn't know why Sun shi would ask for quantity instead of quality, but since the other party had made such a request, he was bound to have a rationale behind it. Naturally, he should first clarify things up so as to prevent a misunderstanding from occurring.

"Several hundred cultivation technique manuals will do as well. Where do I have to go to access them, and what kind of trials will I have to undergo?" Zhang Xuan asked.

To be honest, he was also a little curious to learn what kind of trials that combat masters undergo too.

He hadn't tested out his newfound strength as a Celestial Saint yet, this would be a good opportunity for him to assess where his strength stood against the rest of the Master Teacher Continent.

"The cultivation techniques are in the Inner Breath Division. It happens that I am the head of the Inner Breath Division, so allow me to bring you over!" Division Head Wei said with a smile.

"I'll be counting on you then!" Zhang Xuan nodded with a smile.

Since the other party didn't want him to interfere in their private affairs, he wasn't interested in becoming a busybody either. No matter what, since he had come to the Combat Master Hall, he should at least use this opportunity to raise his strength by at least a little.

"Sun shi, this way please..." Division Head Wei bade Hall Master Xing farewell before leading Zhang Xuan out.

Upon the departure of the duo, Division Head Liao turned to Hall

Master Xing and asked in bewilderment, "Have you ever heard of anyone deriving inspiration by reading a huge variety of cultivation technique manuals? Wouldn't it just make it harder for one to discern the truth from the false, befuddling their train of thoughts further instead?"

"I have never heard of such a thing either, but one thing is for sure. Sun shi is a true genius! Most likely, only Zhang Xuan of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy could be a match for him..."

Halfway through his words, Hall Master Xing suddenly froze. "Wait a moment... Zhang Xuan has just arrived in Qingyuan City, and Sun shi appeared shortly afterward. Furthermore, the both of them seem to be around the same age, and they are both top-notch geniuses..."

"Division Head Liao, where is the painting of Zhang Xuan where Zhuo Qingfeng sent to us previously? Bring it over to me. Back then, I had only taken a glance at it and thought much of it. But this... I need to take another look to verify the matter!"

Chapter 1121: Elder Qi

Zhuo Qingfeng did send a painting of Zhang Xuan to the Combat Master Hall along with his report back then. However, Hall Master Xing didn't think that he was someone whom he needed to take note of back then, so he didn't pay much heed to the matter. After taking a swift glance at it, he had left his subordinates to deal with it.

After all, a person of his position could not possibly be expected to deal with every miscellaneous matter that came his way. If that was really the case, he would have died from exhaustion by now!

However, thinking about how Sun Qiang and Zhang Xuan were of identical ages and were both geniuses, he could not help but pause for a moment.

Yes, the world was huge and had no lack of geniuses. However, those whose talents had reached such an astounding level were still hard-to-come-by. Surely it was too much of a coincidence for two to appear in Qingyuan City simultaneously, right?

"I'll go and take a look!" Nodding, Division Head Liao was about to head out when a frown abruptly surfaced on Hall Master Xing's forehead. Seemingly sensing something, he whipped out a Communication Jade Token.

Swiftly browsing through its content, Hall Master Xing's eyes lit up, and his eyes reddened in agitation.

"What happened?" Division Head Liao asked.

Hall Master Xing rarely allowed himself to show such intense emotions. Something major must have happened for him to react in such a manner!

"Elder Qi has returned!" Hall Master Xing said with clenched fists.

"Elder Qi? You mean the ex-head of the Physician Guild? Back

then, he disappeared shortly after saving you, and I thought that he might have already passed away..." Division Head Liao was surprised by the news, too.

More than two decades ago, Hall Master Xing had been severely wounded by an Otherworldly Demon, and that had caused massive damage to his Primordial Spirit, causing him to lose consciousness for three whole years. If not for Elder Qi, he might have been dead by now!

When he finally regained consciousness, he had intended to repay the favor to the other party, only to find that the other party had suddenly disappeared from the face of the world. He had tried searching for the old physician, but for twenty years, there had been no news whatsoever.

Just as he was on the verge of resigning himself to the fact that Elder Qi really might have passed away... the other party suddenly returned!

"I thought so, too, but it seems like we were mistaken. We'll deal with the matter of the painting later on. For the time being, help me prepare some gifts. I want to pay a visit to him personally!" Hall Master Xing said in agitation.

At this point, there was nothing more important than the return of his benefactor!

The duo swiftly made some preparations before rushing out of the Combat Master Hall. Before long, they had arrived at the Physician Guild and successfully met with Elder Qi.

It seemed like twenty years had not made the old guild leader age in the slightest. If any, his aura seemed to have become even sharper than before.

"Congratulations to Elder Qi for successfully making a breakthrough to Half-Leaving Aperture realm!" Hall Master Xing clasped his fist in agitation.

In the past twenty years, it seemed like the old guild leader had advanced his cultivation considerably. This was a matter to celebrate.

"It seems like you have also made quite some advancement in your cultivation. Not bad, not bad!" Naturally, Elder Qi could also see through Hall Master Xing's cultivation easily as well, and he nodded in approval.

"I am truly grateful to Elder Qi for saving my life back then." Hall Master Xing clasped his fist before asking, "Elder Qi, why did you suddenly depart from Qingyuan City back then?"

Upon hearing Hall Master Xing bringing up the matter, Elder Qi sighed deeply. "There's a long story behind this matter. I did not leave the city voluntarily. Instead, someone poisoned me and sent assailants to end my life. Cornered, I could only flee to a Tier-1 Empire and lie low, or else I would have been a dead man by now!"

"Poisoned? End your life?" Hall Master Xing's face turned livid, and killing intent burst forth from him.

Elder Qi was an upright and respected figure in Qingyuan City. During his time in the Physician Guild, he had saved countless lives, so who in the world would dare make a move against him? Furthermore, right under the nose of the Combat Master Hall at that!

"Elder Qi, do you know who poisoned you?" Hall Master Xing asked with a chilling gleam in his gaze.

"I have a good idea who it is, but... the implications behind this matter are too great, so I need to verify the matter first. The reason I informed you of my return is because I need to discuss this matter with you. At the same time, I hope to seek refuge with the Combat Master Hall for the time being while I reinforce my cultivation and decide on my next course of action!" Elder Qi replied grimly

"Seek refuge? At our Combat Master Hall?" Hall Master Xing's

eyes narrowed.

Even though Elder Qi did not specify a name, just the very fact that he had to seek refuge in the Combat Master Hall had already severely narrowed the scope.

Despite the fact that Elder Qi was the ex-head of the Physician Guild, as well as Half-Leaving Aperture realm expert, for him to need to seek refuge in the Combat Master Hall... The person who poisoned him was bound to be a person who wielded incredible power or influence.

"Very well. I will guarantee your safety!" Hall Master Xing nodded grimly.

The Combat Master Hall was symbolic of the greatest fighting prowess of the Qingyuan Conferred Empire. Putting aside the fact that he had already reached Leaving Aperture realm, even with his previous strength as a Half-Leaving Aperture realm, he could still easily deal with any ordinary Leaving Aperture realm cultivator!

More importantly, there were countless formations spread across the Ten Divisions of the Combat Master Hall. Anyone who dared barge in was simply courting death!

"I'll be thanking Hall Master Xing in advance then. I did not think that the day would come when I would be able to return back to Qingyuan City either. If not for my benefactor saving my life, I probably would have been stuck in that Tier-1 Empire for the rest of my life." Recalling his previous experiences, Elder Qi couldn't help but sigh deeply.

Hall Master Xing was astounded by Elder Qi's words. "For you to be unable to resolve the poison despite your deep mastery in the Way of Medicine... could the benefactor you spoke of possess greater medical skills than you?"

He knew full well how formidable Elder Qi's medical skills were. Even if he was not the number one physician of the Qingyuan

Empire, he was definitely not far from that!

For the benefactor he spoke of to resolve a poison that even Elder Qi was unable to resolve... wasn't that benefactor a little too formidable?

"Compared to him, I'm nothing more like an ant before a divine dragon. I'm nowhere on par with him. Even though my benefactor's cultivation realm is a little low, his medical skills have reached a level far beyond my imagination." Upon speaking of his benefactor, admiration crept into Elder Qi's eyes.

In the field of the Way of Medicine, he had never truly admired or respected anyone, but that young man who had saved his life... He viewed the other party with the utmost reverence!

Hearing that Elder Qi was full of praise for that man, Hall Master Xing couldn't help but ask, "May I know who he is?"

"He goes by the name of Sun Qiang, but I have no idea where he came from and where he is at the moment," Elder Qi said with a hint of lamentation in his voice. He turned to Hall Master Xing and continued. "You have wider connections than me. If there's a chance, help me look out for this man. If I manage to meet him again, I must make sure to express my gratitude to him formally!"

Halfway through Elder Qi's words, Hall Master Xing's eyes had widened to the brim. Perplexed, Elder Qi asked, "What's wrong?"

"A master teacher just came to our Combat Master Hall earlier today, and he goes by the name of Sun Qiang as well. And, if I recall correctly... he claimed to be a physician at one point in time too! C-could it be that... they are both the same person?" Hall Master Xing asked.

Previously, when Sun Qiang offered to use poison to resolve his trauma, the other party had said that he was a physician.

Could there really be such a huge coincidence? Were they really the same person?

"His name is Sun Qiang, too? What does he look like?" Elder Qi asked in agitation.

If Zhang Xuan were there, he surely would have been able to recognize Elder Qi as the Eccentric Old Man whom he had saved back at Jingyuan City.

Back then, after his poison was resolved, he had managed to return to the Primordial Spirit realm in an instant. Over the past two months, by reinforcing his cultivation further, he had managed to achieve another breakthrough, reaching Half-Leaving Aperture realm.

The most important factor that determined whether one was able to advance from Primordial Spirit to Half-Leaving Aperture realm was the resilience of their soul. The twenty years of suffering that Elder Qi had undergone had instead become the impetus to his rapid breakthrough once his condition was resolved.

"He looks like a young man in his early twenties..." Hall Master Xing rattled off a description.

"That isn't right. The Sun Qiang I know of looks to be in his forties. However, there are many experts who are capable of altering their looks, so we can't judge it just based on his appearance in itself. It would be better if I can meet the other party personally. Alright, bring me over to take a look!" Hearing that his benefactor could very well be in the Combat Master Hall, Elder Qi could not hold back his agitation any longer.

"Alright!" Hall Master Xing nodded, and he swiftly brought Elder Qi back to the Combat Master Hall.

...

"The trial in the Inner Breath Division is actually just a simple assessment of the challenger's quantity of zhenqi. There is a powerful formation set up in the Trial of Inner Breath that can

gauge the amount of zhenqi that one harnesses, and the greater the number is, the more zhenqi one wields. As long as you can achieve a score of ten or more, you will be qualified to enter the library to browse through the books you want!" Division Head Wei summarized the trial as they made their way over to the Inner Breath Division.

Zhang Xuan nodded in response.

While the both of them were speaking, they finally arrived at the Inner Breath Division.

It was a grand and splendid building, just like the Heart Division. There were huge crowds of combat masters walking in and out.

"Actually, with Sun shi's strength, there is no need for you to take the trial at all. I can just bring you into the library directly," Division Head Wei stated with a smile.

Given how the young man before him was able to dodge a collaborative offense from the three of them despite possessing just a cultivation of Saint 1-dan pinnacle, there was no doubt that he would be able to overcome the Trial of Inner Breath with ease.

"To be honest with you, I have been cultivating diligently over the past month, but I haven't had a chance to assess the current level of my strength yet. If it isn't too much hassle, I would like to take the Trial of Inner Breath to see how much I am lacking compared to the combat masters," Zhang Xuan replied.

Of course, Zhang Xuan had no doubt that he would be able to clear the Trial of Inner Breath with ease. However, this was a good opportunity not only to assess his own strength but that of the combat masters as well. With some understanding of the combat masters' standard level of strength, he would be able to prepare the members of the Xuanxuan Faction accordingly for the exchange later on.

Otherwise, without the slightest understanding of the combat

masters' strength, they would be at a major disadvantage for the exchange.

On the way there, he had already sent information on the Vitreous Heart Tempering Sutra to Wang Ying and the others. He had simplified the secret art considerably, so even without him deciphering it for them, they would still be able to comprehend and cultivate it easily.

"Lacking?"

On the other hand, Division Head Wei shook his head after hearing Zhang Xuan's words. The ones who were lacking were their combat masters instead!

Of course, he did not tell him that. Instead, he continued leading Zhang Xuan forward, and before long, they were already standing before a passageway.

Unlike the Trial of Inner Demons, where there was scarcely a person to be seen at the entrance, the entrance of Trial of Inner Breaths was surrounded by combat masters.

There were quite a few of them whose cultivation had reached Saint 1-dan pinnacle as well, and they were intending to undergo the trial to gain access to their Saint 2-dan cultivation technique manuals.

Upon seeing that Division Head Wei had arrived, the crowd quickly opened up a path for him to walk through. At the same time, they could not help but direct perplexed gazes at Zhang Xuan.

For a Saint 1-dan fellow to be escorted here personally by their division head, just what was his identity?

Ignoring the perplexed gazes directed at him, Division Head Wei asked, "Who's in there?"

The passageway into the Trial of Inner Breaths was currently closed—a sign that someone was currently challenging the trial

inside.

"Reporting to Division Head Wei, Shi Hao is inside!" reported one of the combat masters amid the crowd.

"Shi Hao?" Division Head Wei's eyes lit up. "That fellow is finally willing to challenge the trial and push for a breakthrough?"

Knowing that Zhang Xuan would be confused about what they were speaking of, he quickly explained, "Sun shi, Shi Hao has been the champion for an internal competition we hold annually in the Saint 1-dan tier for several consecutive years. Just by his strength alone, he has already surpassed the fighting prowess of ordinary Thousand Men Commanders. The zhenqi that he harnesses has also reached a frightening level, such that most Saint 2-dan combat masters would struggle to match him. He reached Saint 1-dan pinnacle twenty years ago, but in order to challenge his limits, he has been suppressing his cultivation all this while, reinforcing his cultivation again and again. However, if he has decided to drop by the Trial of Inner Breaths, he's probably ready to push for a breakthrough to Saint 2-dan now!"

Chapter 1122: Trial of Inner Breath

"He reached Saint 1-dan pinnacle twenty years ago?" Zhang Xuan was astonished.

Those who were able to enter the Combat Master Hall were all the most talented of geniuses. For such an individual to suppress his cultivation for twenty whole years and not achieve a breakthrough, his cultivation must have been reinforced to an unbelievable level!

Hearing the sudden exclamation, a combat master turned to Zhang Xuan with a peculiar gaze and explained, "The reason Shi Hao held himself back from making a breakthrough is to break the existing record of the Trial of Inner Breaths!"

"The current record of the Trial of Inner Breath was 37 points, made by Combat Master Feng Moxiao three hundred years ago. Breaking his record won't be easy at all!" Division Head Wei said with a frown.

For ordinary combat masters, they were considered to have achieved the apex of their cultivation realm just by achieving a score of ten points. Achieving a score of 37 meant that in terms of quantity of zhenqi, Combat Master Feng Moxiao had 3.7 times that of ordinary combat masters. That accomplishment in itself was inconceivable.

It was for this reason that the record had remained unbroken over the past three hundred years.

It was all for the sake of overcoming that record that Shi Hao had held himself back for twenty years, reinforcing his cultivation again and again, in hopes that he would be able to leave his name behind for future generations to look up to and admire.

Even though Division Head Wei had high expectations of Shi Hao, he still thought that it would be extremely difficult for the

latter to break that record. The odds were not in Shi Hao's favor.

"It might have been difficult in the past, but over the past half a year, he has been cultivating frenziedly, killing saint beasts, and gathering Saint-tier medicinal herbs to nourish his meridians and dantian," replied with combat master grimly. "According to the rumors, it seems like he has even delved underground and bathed himself in lava for the sake of refining his zhenqi. Honestly speaking, even I can't imagine how far his strength must have grown over the past half a year! At the very least, I don't think that he will be too far away from matching up to Combat Master Feng Moxiao!"

If it had been half a year ago, no one would have believed that Shi Hao could clear the record. However, after seeing how far Shi Hao had gone to raise his abilities over the past half a year... he might just be able to break that record!

Division Head Wei was stunned for a moment before he shook his head. "That fellow sure is tenacious! I didn't think that he would really cultivate that technique!"

"That technique?" Zhang Xuan asked curiously.

"Ah, I'm referring to a particularly profound cultivation technique of the Inner Breath Division known as the Art of Drawing Oceans. It's said that once one masters that technique, the zhenqi within one's body will become endless, as if drawing strength from the boundless ocean. This is also the technique that Combat Master Feng cultivated back when he made the record. It seems like that lad is really determined to leave his mark here this time around!" Division Head Wei said.

While the duo was speaking, the wall in front of the passageway suddenly lit up.

"Look, the trial is starting!"

Someone among the crowd shouted, and everyone quickly turned

their gazes over.

Hula!

As the light lit up, a string of numbers suddenly materialized on the wall, and it began leaping up swiftly. It did not take long before it came to a halt—38!

"He really broke Combat Master Feng's record..."

Upon seeing those words, everyone was stunned for an instant. Even Division Head Wei had frozen on the spot.

For an entire three hundred years, Combat Master Feng's score had remained an unsurpassable record for those who came after him, and no one had thought it was possible to outdo him either. Who could have known that they would actually witness the birth of a legend today?

"He really didn't disappoint me. It looks like the effort that I spent on him hasn't gone to waste!" Division Head Wei laughed heartily.

He had seen potential in Shi Hao, and he had spent quite some time grooming him over the past few years. It seemed like he had really uncovered a gem this time around!

The door to the passageway slowly opened, and a young man walked out with a slightly pale face.

"Division Head Wei!" Shi Hao hurriedly clasped his fist and bowed upon seeing Division Head Wei. Even though it looked like he had overexerted himself back inside, his back was still upright like a spear.

"Un. You have done well!" Division Head Wei complimented.

"Thank you for guiding me over the past few years!" Shi Hao relied with an excited gleam in his eyes.

The breaking of the record had also given him a great injection of confidence. It was a reassurance to him that he was walking down

the right path.

"A score of 38 means that Shi Hao has displayed a might 3.8 times of an ordinary combat master's. Is it even possible to top that record?"

"I think that his record should remain safe up there for at least the next three hundred years!"

"To maintain a record for several hundred years... Impressive!"

...

An excited commotion broke out in the surroundings.

Watching a record being made before their eyes had left the others imagining themselves being in Shi Hao's place, and that had sparked their drive to cultivate as well.

"Sun shi, you should go in and have a try, too." Seeing that Shi Hao had broken the previous record right before Sun shi, Division Head Wei could not help but feel a little gleeful.

In response to Division Head Wei's words, Zhang Xuan nodded before heading in.

Seeing the young man beside Division Head Wei entering the Trial of Inner Breath, Shi Hao couldn't help but ask, "Division Head Wei, Sun shi is...?"

In the first place, it was perplexing for someone as esteemed as Division Head Wei to be escorting someone around. Furthermore, Shi Hao knew all of the Saint 1-dan pinnacle combat masters in Qingyuan Empire, but the young man's face didn't ring a bell.

Noticing Shi Hao's doubts, Division Head Wei explained, "Sun shi isn't a combat master but a spirit awakener. He has done our hall master a great favor, so make sure to treat him courteously. He said that he is interested in testing his strength, so I brought him here to give it a try.

"A spirit awakener wants to try out our Trial of Inner Breaths?

What a joke!" Shi Hao sneered disdainfully.

He had thought that the other party would be some formidable expert, but who would have thought that he was a mere spirit awakener!

Spirit awakener was only a supporting occupation, and their fighting prowess was known to be rather unimpressive. For a spirit awakener to challenge the trial of their Combat Master Hall, wasn't that a joke in itself?

Not only did Shi Hao react in such a manner, the others also shook their heads as well.

Spirit awakeners were simply way too weak!

Sun shi might have helped their hall master in some way, but still, he was being too arrogant for thinking that he was worthy of challenging their trial as a spirit awakener!

Seeing that Shi Hao had blatantly ignored his reminder, Division Head Wei frowned in displeasure. However, seeing that Sun shi was not around, he decided to allow it to slide this once. "Don't underestimate Sun shi. In terms of fighting prowess, he is likely to be above all of you here!"

He had seen Sun shi in action, and the other party's reflexes and sense of timing were at a monstrous level. However, given that they had not truly crossed blows with one another previously, he could not tell for sure how much zhenqi Sun shi wielded. Thus, he could not really gauge how well the other party would fare in this trial.

Nevertheless, a person who possessed such frightening combat senses should not fare too badly in terms of zhenqi.

Shi Hao was initially astonished by Division Head Wei's high appraisal of Sun shi. However, recalling the amazing feat that he had just achieved, he held his chest up high confidently and replied, "His fighting prowess may be above mine, but in terms of

zhenqi quantity, there is no one who can possibly outdo me!"

As one of the greatest geniuses of the Inner Breath Division in the past three hundred years, it was natural that his confidence would not waver with just this much.

"The trial is beginning!"

Someone shouted once more, and everyone quickly turned their head. They were interested to see how the man who was so highly-regarded by their division head would fare in the trial.

Weng!

A burst of light emerged from the wall, but unlike the situation with Shi Hao previously, no number surfaced.

"There are no numbers at all? It can't be that fellow didn't even succeed in shattering the first stone wall?"

"One has to shatter the first wall in order to claim the ten points required to clear the examination. If one fails to shatter the wall, no results will be reflected."

"I thought that he would wow all of us here like Shi Hao, but it seems like... he's just a mere mortal after all!"

...

Seeing that there were no numbers surfacing on the wall in front of the passageway, everyone shook their head in disappointment. On the other hand, Division Head Wei could not help but feel a little bewildered.

Judging from how Sun shi had performed in the previous battle, it should not have been too difficult for him to earn ten points. So, how could there be no results whatsoever?

Had the test not started yet?

But that could not be! The burst of light was indicative that the test had already started, so how could there be no result?

Jiya!

Just as Division Head Wei was still pondering over the bewildering situation, the door to the passageway suddenly creaked. Someone was coming out.

It went without saying that the departure of the challenger meant that the trial had already ended.

If the challenger had met the fundamental requirement, a score would have already appeared by now. The fact that there was no score meant that, just as what the others had said, Sun shi had failed to break even the first wall.

Division Head Wei sighed. It seems that, despite Sun shi's amazing reflexes, he's still a little lacking in terms of his zhenqi.

Having strong fighting prowess only meant that one was able to utilize one's strength efficiently and effectively, and that might not necessarily be directly correlated with one's zhenqi quantity. And the Trial of Inner Breath only assessed one's zhenqi quantity.

To put it simply, it was just like the difference between sprinting and running a marathon.

Even if an individual could utilize their strength effectively and sprint at a speed far beyond the others, that did not mean that they would necessarily be good at a marathon.

Sun shi was probably the type of cultivator who had extremely powerful burst power, allowing him to overwhelm his enemy swiftly. However, if the battle was not concluded quickly, he might lack the endurance to follow through.

While Division Head Wei was contemplating over this matter, Zhang Xuan finally walked out of the room with a sheepish look on his face.

Division Head Wei thought that Zhang Xuan was feeling sheepish due to his poor results in the trial, so he quickly stepped forward to alleviate the awkwardness in the air. "Don't worry about the

results. Come, let me bring you to the library!"

"Those walls..." Zhang Xuan pointed into the Trial of Inner Breath and spoke hesitantly.

"Don't worry, it's fine. You aren't a combat master, so you need not feel pressured by the matter!" Division Head Wei patted Zhang Xuan's shoulder and smiled.

The other party was only a spirit awakener, not a combat master. Considering their differing fields of specialty, it would be unfair to hold him to the same standards.

"But..." Zhang Xuan was visibly a little distressed by the situation.

"It's just a simple trial; it's no big deal at all!" Division Head Wei added.

"No big deal at all?" A light flickered across Zhang Xuan's eyes, and he turned to Division Head Wei and asked, "Ah, does the formation automatically repair itself?"

"Hmm? Yes, that's right. The formation will automatically repair any damage to the walls inside, so there's no need to worry about that!" Division Head Wei replied amiably.

"That's good!" Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief, and the conflicted expression on his face finally vanished, replaced with a smile. "Alright, let's head to the library then!"

Division Head Wei nodded before leading the way.

The library of the Inner Breath Division was located relatively close to the trial. With a wave of his hand, a passageway opened in the formation surrounding the library, and the both of them proceeded in.

...

"I thought that he would be some formidable expert, but to think that he couldn't even break the first wall..."

"Well, he's just a spirit awakener. Do you honestly expect a spirit awakener to be able to clear the trials of our Combat Master Hall?"

"I figure that he's probably a scion from some prestigious clan here for a tour. With strength like that, I could easily defeat three of him simultaneously, so how could he possibly be of any help to our hall master?"

After seeing the duo enter the library, a huge commotion immediately broke out among the combat masters.

They had to clear the trial before they could assess the library to pick out their cultivation technique. On the other hand, the spirit awakener did not even clear the trial, and yet, Division Head Wei still escorted him there. The clear disparity in their treatment left them a little dissatisfied.

"Alright, let's not waste our breath on that fellow. He isn't a combat master, so how can we hold him to our standards?" Interrupting the discussions of the crowd, Shi Hao turned to another combat master and said, "Speaking of which, Xiao Bo, didn't you have a bet with me previously to see who will be able to leave our mark in the Trial of Inner Breath? I am done with the trial, so it should be your turn now. Let's see if you can beat my record!"

With the gazes of the crowd on him, the face of the combat master named Xiao Bo reddened. "There's no way that I will be able to clear your record, but a score of 20 or so should still be a walk in the park!"

"You achieved a score of 21 previously, right? Alright, I won't bully you then. As long as you can achieve a score exceeding 23, I'll consider it your victory. Naturally, the stakes that we agreed on previously still count!" Shi Hao chuckled.

Xiao Bo pondered for a moment before nodding. "Alright then..."

Taking a deep breath, he pushed open the door and walked into

the passageway. However, before his entire body could step through the door, he suddenly halted. As if having seen a ghost, his body trembled uncontrollably.

"H-h-h-how is this p-p-p-possible?" A high-pitched scream echoed from the passageway.

Everyone was bewildered by Xiao Bo's sudden scream. Shi Hao rushed forward and asked, "What's wrong?"

While speaking those words, he also peered through the ajar door. His eyes immediately narrowed, and his face paled. He could not help but retreat backward, and his body stiffened.

Chapter 1123: A Score of 100

Seeing the two experts of the Combat Master Hall reacting in such a bewildering fashion, the crowd frowned. They quickly gathered around the door to take a look.

Jiya!

The door to the passageway was pushed open entirely, and the sight inside came into plain view.

"This..."

All of the combat masters instinctively drew in sharp gasps, and their eyes widened in horror.

After a long moment of silence, Xiao Bo gulped and spoke hoarsely. "Shi Hao, when you came out previously, are you certain that... the trial reverted back to normal?"

"Un. When I left, the trial had definitely reverted back to normal. It must be him. There's no one else; it must be him!" Shi Hao replied in agitation.

Despite being labeled as a trial, the Trial of Inner Breath was actually rather simple. The challenger only had to stand at a specified location and exert their zhenqi to destroy the stone walls located several dozen meters away.

These stone walls were conjured by the formation, and they were particularly resistant to zhenqi. Without a sufficiently large reserve of zhenqi, it would be impossible to puncture a hole through it.

Under normal circumstances, a Ten Men Commander would have to use his full strength just to break the first wall.

The fact that Shi Hao had received 3.8 points meant that he had nearly broken through the fourth wall before his zhenqi was depleted.

Without a doubt, this achievement should have made him the number one Saint 1-dan pinnacle expert of the Qingyuan Empire Combat Master Hall since its founding.

But right before his eyes...

All ten stone walls had been shattered into fragments. The Trial of Inner Breath had been reduced to little more than a rubbish dump.

"Did he intentionally destroy our trial?" asked one of the combat masters.

The Trial of Inner Breath was one of the most important facilities of their Combat Master Hall. To reduce it to such a state, wasn't that a little too much?

"That isn't it." Xiao Bo walked into the wrecked room and stopped right before the first stone wall. His eyes narrowed in disbelief as he explained, "The formation in the trial was created by an 8-star formation master sent by the headquarters. With his Saint 1-dan pinnacle cultivation, he wouldn't be able to cause damage even if he wanted to!"

Given that this was a location for a cultivator to test the amount of zhenqi they had, it was natural that it was built to be able to withstand a great deal of damage. Even with a combat master exerting their full might, it wouldn't even leave a scratch in the area. Given so, it was impossible to intentionally destroy it!

"Then how..." the combat master who had spoken earlier asked.

"This... was caused by a single palm strike!"

The one who spoke was Shi Hao this time around. There was a grim look in his narrowed eyes.

"A single palm strike?"

Everyone was perplexed by those words.

"In other words, he challenged the trial as anyone else would,

but... due to the overwhelming zhenqi that he harnesses, the ten stone walls were destroyed in an instant. At the same time, the formation was unable to withstand the violent might he exerted, thus resulting in the ruination that we see!" Shi Hao explained.

"His strength... exceeded the tolerance of the formation?"

"He destroyed ten stone walls simultaneously?"

Everyone gulped down a mouthful of saliva.

This news was simply too shocking! It was at a level far beyond their imagination!

"Shi Hao is right. Look at those broken stone walls. I believe that you should notice something peculiar about them, too." Xiao Bo nodded as he pointed to the fragmented walls before him.

Everyone quickly rushed into the room to get a closer look, and before long, their eyes were widened in shock.

On the first wall face, there was a clean palm print smashed into it. As if a wrecking ball, the palm print had crushed through it with great ease.

Xiao Bo nodded. "This is just the first stone wall. Look at the others, and you should understand why Shi Hao said that."

The others quickly turned their gazes over.

There were palm prints on the other nine faces as well, and they were identical in size. If one were to line them up, one would realize that they were connected by a straight line.

In other words... all ten of the stone walls were shattered simultaneously by just a single move!

Shi Hao could already be known as the greatest genius of the Inner Breath Division in the past several millenniums, and yet, he had only achieved a score of 3.8 points, not being able to break even the fourth wall before he ran out of zhenqi. And yet, that fellow actually broke through all ten walls in a single palm strike,

and even the formation couldn't withstand his might.

How in the world did he do it?

"I just said a moment ago that no one will break Combat Master Shi's record for the next three hundred years..."

"I was also thinking the same as you, but who could have known that... in just two short minutes, someone would have already out done him? And as if to rub salt to his wounds, it was done so overwhelmingly, fully displaying the vast contrast in their strength."

Everyone's body were shaking wildly.

They had just mocked the other party for being so arrogant to challenge their trial despite only being a spirit awakener, but who could have known that a single palm strike from the other party was more than sufficient to devastate their trial?

"How could a Saint 1-dan cultivator have so much zhenqi? In any case, there's no way this can be true. Say, is it possible that he might have used some kind of formidable artifact?" asked one of the combat masters among the crowd.

As combat masters, they were geniuses among geniuses, but even clearing the Trial of Inner Breath posed a great difficulty for them. So how could the fellow achieve such an inconceivable feat?

"Artifact? You are really overthinking this one. Look over there!" Shi Hao shook his head and pointed in a certain direction.

Frowning, the combat master turned his gaze over, and what he saw left his body shivering in shock.

On the wall, a string of numbers could be clearly seen—100!

Since the result was reflected on the wall outside, it went without saying that it would be reflected within as well so that the challenger would know how well they had performed.

The formation had the ability to detect whether artifacts had

been used or not, and once the presence of an artifact was detected, the results would automatically be voided.

"100..." The combat master felt the back of his throat running dry. "If he achieved a score, why isn't it reflected outside?"

The other combat masters also turned their gazes over.

Indeed, if there was a score reflected within, why wasn't it reflected on the wall outside? It did not make sense.

It was precisely because there was nothing outside that they had thought that the spirit awakener had failed the trial in the first place!

"Most likely, the formation was destroyed before it could transmit the result to the wall outside," Shi Hao said with a bitter smile.

"This..."

Taking another look at the devastated surroundings, the crowd came to a realization.

"Still, to be able to destroy all ten of the stone tablets with a single palm strike... just how much zhenqi does that Sun shi possess?"

Hearing that question, the combat masters couldn't help but fall silent.

...

Upon entering the library, Division Head Wei gestured to the shelves of books and said, "This is our library. Its scale is nowhere up to par to the Master Teacher Pavilion, but our cultivation techniques are all top-notch. There won't be any problem cultivating them!"

Most of the books in the Master Teacher Pavilion were created by many different generations of master teachers. As a result, there were many books that contradicted one another, making it

difficult to determine the 'truth' from the 'false'. If one were to read aimlessly, one would just serve to confuse themselves. It was for this reason that it was a huge taboo for a master teacher to randomly browse through books.

Without direction, the more one read, the more confused one would be. Eventually, it would erode one's state of mind and result in the birth of inner demons, thus causing one's cultivation to stagnate or even go berserk.

However, the libraries of the Combat Master Hall were different.

Most of the cultivation technique manuals on their shelves had been practiced by preceding combat masters, and they were proven to be practical time and time again. Otherwise, they would either be further refined or eliminated altogether. No matter which book one picked off the shelves, it was bound to be a formidable cultivation technique that would allow one to advance one's cultivation swiftly!

Zhang Xuan nodded before heading forward to take a look. Soon, however, he could not help but feel a little disappointed.

Just as the other party had said, there were indeed not many cultivation technique manuals on the shelves. All in all, they only numbered several hundred.

But while they did not have many cultivation technique manuals, they did have a bunch of introductory manuals filled with the insights of the predecessors. There were around several hundred thousand of those altogether.

"Those shelves over there contain the insights of preceding combat masters. However, due to the unique constitution of each cultivator, the path that each individual takes is bound to differ from anyone else's. Thus, you should keep this in mind while browsing those books. If you simply read through them aimlessly, you might risk confusing yourself!" Division Head Wei explained.

"These books over here are the insights left behind by Hall Master Xing. If you must, it'd be better to study his. This way, if you have any questions, you could at least clarify them with him!"

Zhang Xuan nodded before turning his gaze back to the hundreds of cultivation technique manuals.

Those insights meant very little to him. What was more important were the cultivation techniques themselves.

Huala!

With a quick glance, he collected all of those books into the Library of Heaven's Path.

"Compile," Zhang Xuan muttered softly.

In the blink of an eye, a brand-new book appeared. Placing his finger on it, the knowledge contained within it flowed into his mind.

Hmm? Not too bad, I managed to compile a complete cultivation technique from those books. Zhang Xuan frowned. However, there are still three flaws in it.

Even though there were several hundred books, due to their concise and profound content, Zhang Xuan was still able to successfully form a Saint 2-dan cultivation technique. However, there were three flaws with it.

Zhang Xuan shook his head. There are still too many flaws for me to cultivate it. Never mind, I should take in all of the other cultivation technique manuals first!

It was one thing for his battle technique to be flawed, but for his cultivation technique...

All along, he had only practiced the flawless Heaven's Path Divine Art. The only flawed cultivation technique that he had practiced was the Saint Ascension Decipher, but even so, he had made up for those flaws by using artifacts as catalysts. Thus, it was

unacceptable for him to cultivate such a flawed Saint 2-dan cultivation technique!

It seemed like he would have to find some way to gather more Saint 2-dan cultivation techniques to remove those flaws.

Zhang Xuan turned his gaze to the insights, and after sweeping through them, he realized that they did little to remove the flaws in the Saint 2-dan cultivation technique. Thus, he decided not to collect them anymore.

Zhang Xuan turned to Division Head Wei and asked, "Are there any Saint 3-dan cultivation techniques here?"

"Saint 3-dan cultivation techniques? We do have some of them here. Follow me!"

Given how Division Head Wei was at Primordial Spirit realm pinnacle, it went without saying that the Combat Master Hall had Saint 3-dan and Saint 4-dan cultivation techniques.

Soon, they arrived at the area where the Saint 3-dan cultivation technique manuals were stored. Just as he had guessed earlier, there were even fewer of them around.

It took just an instant for him to collect all of them into his Library of Heaven's Path, and after taking a look at it, he could not help but feel even more disappointed.

He did not even manage to successfully compile a Saint 3-dan cultivation technique.

Under Division Head Wei's lead, he collected the Saint 4-dan cultivation techniques too, but he could not compile a cultivation technique either.

Seeing how the young man had been walking around the library without picking up any book at all, Division Head Wei couldn't help but ask, "Sun shi, may I ask exactly what kind of book you are looking for? Perhaps I may be able to assist you in searching for it."

"I'm not too sure either, but it doesn't seem like there's anything suitable for me here." Zhang Xuan shook his head.

After a moment of hesitation, he continued. "Right, do you have any other Saint 2-dan cultivation technique manuals? Their tier doesn't matter; I need as many of them as possible."

To him, the tier of the cultivation technique truly did not make much of a difference at all.

As long as the number was sufficient, he would be able to compile a Heaven's Path Divine Art.

Well, it was true that high-tier cultivation techniques had fewer flaws, so he needed less of them to compile a Heaven's Path Divine Art, but the problem with that was that they were rare and hard to obtain!

"I'm afraid that there are not any more in our Inner Breath Division. However, Division Head Feng of the Martial Arts Division might have some. He was originally from the Master Teacher Pavilion, and he has a huge collection of battle technique and cultivation technique manuals. In the Combat Master Hall, he's the one who is the most likely to fulfill your needs!" Division Head Wei replied.

"Oh? May I trouble you to take me to the Martial Arts Division to take a look then?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"That isn't a problem!"

Smiling, Division Head Wei led Zhang Xuan out of the library.

However, upon reaching the entrance, his eyelids suddenly began twitching.

Chapter 1124: Too Long, Too Long

A huge crowd of combat masters were standing right outside the library. Shi Hao and Xiao Bo from before were among them as well.

"What are you all up to?" The huge crowd gathered had eyes that were either reddened from agitation or anger. However, regardless of what it was, it was clear that they were up to something. Thus, Division Head Wei frowned in displeasure and said, "Sun shi isn't from the Combat Master Hall, so he need not obey our rules to enter the library."

"Division Head Wei, we aren't here for the matter!" Noting that Division Head Wei had misunderstood their intentions, Shi Hao quickly spoke up and explained, "There's a matter that we hope for you look into!"

The happenings in the Trial of Inner Breath were simply too shocking that they feared that the other party would not believe them if they were to just speak of it. It was better to bring the other party over to have a look for himself.

Noticing the grim looks on their faces, Division Head Wei asked, "What happened?"

"Division Head Wei, this way please. You will understand once you see it!" Huang Bo said as he politely gestured the way forward.

"Alright then." Seeing that they were not willing to speak of it, Division Head Wei thought that it might be a matter that was confidential to the Inner Breath Division. Thus, he turned to Zhang Xuan and said, "Pardon me, but I will have to trouble Sun shi to wait here for a moment."

"Don't worry, it's no problem at all." Zhang Xuan nodded.

It was apparent that the other party had some private matters to attend to, so it was not convenient for him to tag along.

With an apologetic look, Division Head Wei quickly followed Xiao Bo out.

After he left, Zhang Xuan shook his head. Just as he was about to close his eyes and make use of this opportunity to look through the books that he had just collected, the combat master named Shi Hao suddenly walked up to him. "My name is Shi Hao, and I wish to have a spar with Sun shi."

Considering how the other party had smashed through all ten of the stone walls in the Inner Breath Division, the sheer amount of zhenqi the other party possessed was bound to be countless times greater than his. He had never met a peer who exceeded him by so much before, and this had truly piqued his curiosity and fighting will.

At the same time, he also wanted to see if the other party had truly used his own strength to achieve such an astounding score in the Trial of Inner Breath.

"You want to have a spar with me?"

"That's right!" Shi Hao clasped his fist. "I hope that Sun shi can agree to my request!"

Noting the earnest look in the other party's eyes, Zhang Xuan relented. "Alright then!"

All along, other than Feng Xun, he had never crossed blows with any combat masters before. This would be a good opportunity for him to assess their strength too.

"Pardon me!"

Taking a deep breath, Shi Hao's chest puffed up. At the same time, his aura surged immensely, and as if a dagger drawn from his sheath, a chilling air burst into the surroundings.

Hu la!

He sprinted forward swiftly with powerful footsteps. Even before

he reached Zhang Xuan, he had already whipped up a strong gale in the surroundings, leaving one feeling as if a behemoth was standing before them.

Sheer power could crush all techniques.

The amount of zhenqi that ran through Shi Hao's body was so great that he did not even need to resort to any battle techniques when facing ordinary cultivators; all he had to do was to overwhelm them with the sheer amount of his zhenqi.

He was planning to do the same this time around too. His zhenqi gushed out as if water bursting out from a dam. Before such power, ordinary cultivators would find themselves completely bogged down by the intense concentration of zhenqi, leaving them incapable of retaliating or even escaping.

Art of Drawing Oceans: against the boundless mass of the ocean, it was impossible to withstand or avoid it!

"Not bad!" Feeling the other party's strength, Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

If he had not cultivated the Saint Ascension Decipher, the other party's zhenqi would probably have been on par with his.

To gain the same quantity of zhenqi as him, who had practiced the Heaven's Path Divine Art, through just an ordinary cultivation technique, the combat master named Shi Hao was indeed a formidable figure. It was no wonder he was able to break the existing record and claim first place for himself.

"Make your move!" While Zhang Xuan was still deep in thought. Shi Hao bellowed loudly as he raised his palm and struck at him.

It was not a particularly powerful battle technique, just the most basic Great Palm Strike.

But as simple as the technique was, the might it harnessed when complemented with Shi Hao's overwhelming zhenqi was frightening. It felt as if the technique would rip a hole even in

space itself. The surrounding air currents raged under the furious strength of his Great Palm Strike, and the rumbling of thunder echoed in the surroundings.

The frightening amount of zhenqi formed a huge flood that threatened to crush everything in its path.

Without dodging, Zhang Xuan simply smiled lightly as he shot a finger forward.

Huala!

The ferocious wave stopped right before his fingertip, unable to advance a single inch forward. As if a snake grabbed seven inches from its head, no matter how the wave raged, it found itself rendered completely helpless by the finger before it.

"Scram!"

Seeing how the other party had stopped his strongest attack with just a single finger, Shi Hao's face flushed red. With a furious roar, he drove his strength to its very maximum, to the point where his meridians were beginning to tear from the immense pressure from the zhenqi racing through them.

Noting the veins bulging from Shi Hao's head, Zhang Xuan shook his head. He bent his finger back slightly before flicking it forward forcefully.

Peng!

The massive wave vanished, and the rampaging zhenqi scattered into the surroundings. Deng deng deng deng! Shi Hao was forced to retreat eight steps, and his face turned scarlet from the impact.

Shi Hao swiftly took two breaths in order to calm his state, and to his astonishment, he realized that he had emerged from the short but deadly encounter with no injuries at all. In that instant, his face reddened in shame, and he quickly stepped forward and clasped his fist.

"Sun shi, thank you for going easy on me..."

He had attacked with his full strength; any ordinary cultivator would have suffered severe injuries in an instant. Yet, putting aside how the other party managed to subdue his attack with a single finger, he even controlled his strength so precisely that the damage he would suffer as a result of the collision of strength would be reduced to the bare minimum.

It was one thing to wield great power, but to be able to control it to such a precise extent as well... Terrifying!

"Your fighting prowess isn't too bad," Zhang Xuan complimented.

He did mean those words. In terms of quantity of zhenqi, the other party was just slightly beneath Wang Ying, Liu Yang, and his other direct disciples.

If he fought against the members of the Xuanxuan Faction, it was likely that the latter would not be a match for him.

It seemed like he would have to instruct those of the Xuanxuan Faction not to face this Combat Master Shi Hao in a direct clash of zhenqi, or else they would surely suffer tragic losses.

"Thank you!" Shi Hao thanked Zhang Xuan, but he couldn't completely conceal the bitterness on his face.

He was the individual who boasted the greatest amount of zhenqi among all Saint 1-dan cultivators ever since the founding of the Qingyuan Empire Combat Master Hall, but yet, in the other party's eyes, he could only qualify as 'not bad'!

However, the other party did have the right to say so.

Shi Hao hesitated for a moment before saying, "I was unwilling to believe it at first, but it seems like you have really cleared the Trial of Inner Breath with your own strength. If it's not too much, there's one question I would like to ask you!"

"Feel free to speak!"

"To destroy all ten of the stone walls in a single palm... May I know how much zhenqi you expended in that single blow?" Shi Hao asked.

Even after depleting the very last bit of his zhenqi, he had only managed to shatter three walls. The fact that the other party had destroyed everything within a single palm strike meant that he did not use his full strength in the first place. The truth might very well frighten him, but even so, he still wanted to know how much strength the other party used to shatter the ten stone walls. He would then use that as a gauge and aim to surpass the other party in the future.

The few combat masters who had remained in the area to spectate the fight also quickly turned their gazes over. They were intrigued by this matter as well.

When Shi Hao emerged from the passageway, his face had been ghastly pale, and he had looked as if he would fall at any moment. It had taken him several pills and a long moment of recuperation before he had been able to heal up sufficiently to use the ultimate technique that he had just executed.

On the other hand, Sun shi had walked out of the passageway with a healthy red glow on his face, such that it almost seemed like he had just attended a feast instead of undergoing a trial. After that, he still had the strength to visit the library and browse through books. It would be understandable if he had not cleared the trial, but the problem was that he had done so with full marks! So, just how much zhenqi could he have?

"How much zhenqi did I expend?" Zhang Xuan did not really expect the other party to ask such a question. Scratching his head, he pondered for a moment before replying, "I wasn't pay much attention to it, but I should have recovered fully by the time I entered the library. Thank you for your concern."

Recovered fully by the time you entered the library? Thank you for my concern? Shi Hao choked on his saliva, and he nearly passed out on the spot.

Who the heck is worried about you? What I want to know is how powerful you are! But... you actually recovered by the time you entered the library?

Doesn't that mean that the amount of zhenqi you expended in the Trial of Inner Breath is insignificant to you?

This realization left Shi Hao's face paling, and he suddenly felt an excruciating ache in his heart.

For twenty years, he had held himself back from making a breakthrough, all for the sake of breaking a record and creating a legend for the future generations. He did manage to break the record, but it did not last for even two minutes before it was callously smashed by another person.

To make things worse, the other party did not even think that it was anything much!

He had thought that, at the very most, he would just have to work diligently for another twenty years to overcome the other party. However, judging from the current situation... even two hundred years would not be sufficient for him to reach the other party's level!

The gap between them was simply too huge, too huge!

In an instant, Shi Hao felt so traumatized that he seemed to be withering on the spot.

Only he himself knew how much suffering he had gone through over the past twenty years for the single goal of breaking the record. Many times, he had thought of giving up and just achieving a breakthrough on the spot, but upon thinking of that single goal he had, he had gritted his teeth and persevered. However, the goal that he had striven for all this time turned out to be nothing in the

other party's eyes.

The more he thought about it, the more he felt like spewing blood.

Shi Hao gritted his teeth and asked once more, "Then... May I know how long Sun shi has been in Saint 1-dan to accumulate such astounding reserves of zhenqi?"

Even though the other party looked to be in his early twenties on the surface, there were several powerful clans who had secret arts that allowed them to conceal their age. Take him for example, he was already in his two hundreds this year, but in the eyes of others, he only appeared to be in his late thirties.

If the other party had spent more than twenty years at Saint 1-dan pinnacle, at the very least, he could console himself that the time he had spent was not in vain, and he could pick up some of his shattered fragments of confidence.

However, upon hearing Shi Hao's words, Zhang Xuan could not help but sigh deeply in lamentation. "It's a huge regret, but I have spent much longer than I thought I would in this realm!"

As he was unable to find the Saint 2-dan Heaven's Path Divine Art, he had ended up being stuck in Saint 1-dan for much longer than he would have liked. Just the thought of it left his face reddening in shame. This was like a dark stain on his record.

"You have spent much longer than you thought you would in this realm?" Shi Hao heaved a sigh of relief.

Given that the other party had also spent a long time in the realm in order to achieve such strength, it seemed like the talent he had did not pale too much in comparison to the other party after all.

"Indeed. I simply have not been able to find a suitable cultivation technique to achieve a breakthrough. That's also why I paid a visit to your library in hopes that I might find some inspiration for me to overcome my bottleneck!" Zhang Xuan sighed once more and

shook his head regretfully. "After all, I have already been in this realm for more than a month. If I don't achieve a breakthrough soon, I won't have any face to stand before my students anymore."

"..." Shi Hao clutched his chest tightly.

"..." The other combat masters.

Chapter 1125: Teacher, Thank You for Your Guidance

Shi Hao had spent a whole twenty years at Saint 1-dan pinnacle before being able to gather that much power. He had thought that the other party would have been in Saint 1-dan for decades at the very minimum since he was lamenting over the long period of time he had been in the realm, but who would have thought...

A month...

A month...

Long your head!

To reinforce your cultivation to such an extent within such a short period of time, and you still say that you've spent a long time in the realm... Will you die if you stop boasting?

Shi Hao felt the pain in his heart intensifying even further.

The others also had the same expressions on their faces. If only they were strong enough, they would have rushed forward to give him a good pummeling.

That fellow was truly asking for it!

To grumble about a month being too long, and even complaining that he would be unable to face his students...

With such speed, are you sure you are cultivating and not flying?

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan, who had only noticed the bitter expressions on the faces around him, shook his head helplessly.

That was truly his honest opinion; he was neither boasting nor showing off. Putting aside Zhao Ya, Yuan Tao, and the others, who were going to inherit powerful heritages, even Wang Ying had reached Nascent Saint pinnacle and was about to achieve a breakthrough anytime soon. On the other hand, his apothecary

student, Luo Qiqi, had already achieved strength on par with him, Saint realm 1-dan pinnacle, and if he did not achieve a breakthrough soon, the other party might very well surpass him.

It was not that he did not want to take his time, but with his students chasing right behind him, if he slacked off in the least, he would find himself lagging far behind them. Honestly speaking, he was also in a very difficult situation. Why wouldn't anyone just take him seriously when he said such words?

It truly was not easy to be a teacher!

Suppressing the urge to sink his fist into the other party's face, Shi Hao lowered his head and asked, "To be able to accumulate such an immense reserve of zhenqi within a single month, may I ask how Sun shi cultivates? If it is not too much to ask, we would like to learn from you as well!"

Realizing that this might be an opportunity for them, the others echoed Shi Hao's words and bowed deeply as well.

They had been stuck in the same cultivation realm for several years or even several decades for some. To them, cultivation was a lengthy and tiresome process, reminiscent of water droplets slowly grinding away on a rock. Yet, the young man before them had only cultivated for a month, and he had already amassed sufficient strength to destroy ten stone walls simultaneously. If they could learn his cultivation technique, their cultivation would surely soar rapidly as well.

"How do I cultivate?" Hearing the question, Zhang Xuan turned to look at the crowd before him and smiled. "Actually, it isn't anything complicated. A single word—conception! Take your Art of Drawing Ocean as an example. I heard that you hunted down saint beasts and gathered Saint-tier medicinal herbs in order to complement the innate flaws in your body. You even went to the extent of heading underground to temper your zhenqi through the heart of the lava. You did manage to advance your fighting

prowess significantly through such methods, but there's a cap to how far you can go by relying on external means. It will be harder for you to advance any further in such manner!

"The Art of Drawing Oceans empties out great oceans and converts them into devastating power for you to wield. In order to truly comprehend the conception behind the cultivation technique, you have to first understand the boundlessness of the ocean and comprehend its natural state. Once you manage to comprehend its conception, your body will naturally become as vast and boundless as the ocean, too!"

Zhang Xuan had seen the manual for the Art of Drawing Oceans in the library earlier, and after compiling it with the other manuals, he had gained a deep understanding to what the cultivation technique was at its very core.

"Conception?" Shi Hao hesitated for a moment before continuing on. "I once spent half a year on a remote island in the hope of comprehending the essence of the cultivation technique, but I didn't make much of an improvement that way. That's also why I chose to resort to external means instead."

There were at least several thousand books explaining the Art of Drawing Oceans in the library, and a couple of them had spoken about conception. Drawing on those insights, Shi Hao had attempted to further his cultivation that way too, but his effort had turned out to be futile. As such, he had only been able to try other means. It was fortunate that hard work did not fail him, and his cultivation finally achieved a level far surpassing the others.

"Do you know why you weren't able to succeed despite spending half a year on a remote island?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"This..." Shi Hao halted.

If he knew, he would have already corrected it long ago. He would not have ended up seeking alternative means.

"Your mind is too fixated on surpassing the record!" Zhang Xuan placed his hands behind his back and sighed deeply. "Your fixation on the record had made you deeply apprehensive, depriving you of even the courage to challenge the trial once. You have always told yourself that you would only challenge the trial once you have reached the very apex of Saint 1-dan, but where is that apex? Do you think that you are already at the apex? If you have truly reached the apex, why aren't you able to rival a single finger of mine?"

"The vast ocean accepts every river that converges into it. To master the Art of Drawing Oceans, your state of mind must be vast as well. Struggle not, fight not, desire not, plead not, and only then will you be able to peer into the essence of the technique. But you are too fixated on whether you can surpass Combat Master Feng Moxiao's record or not. From the very start, your state of mind has been incredibly narrow. With such a mindset, you will never be able to comprehend the sheer vastness of the ocean no matter how long you remain on a remote island." Zhang Xuan sighed.

When he sparred with Shi Hao, the Library of Heaven's Path had compiled a book on the other party. With a glance at it, he could tell that despite Shi Hao's strong foundation in the Art of Drawing Oceans, he had inadvertently gone down the wrong path.

"I..." Shi Hao's body stiffened. Closing his eyes, the twenty years of hard work he had devoted to furthering his cultivation flashed through his mind.

Some time later, he opened his eyes once more. Stepping forward, he knelt down and kowtowed. "I have benefited greatly from Sun shi's teachings. If you hadn't pointed out the path for me, I might have continued deviating from the true path and eventually limited my own accomplishments!"

After all of those memories played in his mind, he understood that he had erred.

Had it not been for the timely reminder from the young man before him, he would have continued treading down the same path. Perhaps, his cultivation would still rise swiftly, but eventually, he would find it harder and harder for him to reach higher realms, and the Primordial Spirit realm could very well have ended up becoming a pipe dream for him.

It was fortunate that someone had pulled him back from the cliff before that happened. It was still not too late for him to change.

"There's no need to stand on ceremony; we are just exchanging insights with one another." Zhang Xuan hurriedly helped Shi Hao up.

Another combat master stepped forward and asked, "I have been stuck at Saint 1-dan pinnacle for five whole years. Five years ago, I failed to clear the Trial of Inner Breath, and five years later, I am still unable to overcome my limits. I hope that Sun shi can offer me some pointers. Have I gone down the wrong path for my cultivation, or is my state of mind still too lacking?"

"Execute a battle technique."

"Yes!"

The combat master began executing a forceful punching routine. His zhenqi flowed through his body with incredible momentum, creating resounding cracking sounds.

"That's enough." Zhang Xuan stopped the other party halfway through. "If I'm not mistaken, you cultivate the Combat Master Hall's River Reversing Art, right? River Reversing and Drawing Oceans, these two cultivation techniques boast the greatest zhenqi quantity within the Inner Breath Division. Under normal circumstances, five years of accumulation should have allowed you to clear the examination easily, but you still remain limited by your bottleneck. This isn't a problem with your talent. You are still cultivating based on the formula left behind by Combat Master Bai Mo two thousand years ago, aren't you?"

"H-how did you know?" exclaimed the combat master in shock.

Combat Master Bai Mo was known for his astounding accomplishment in the River Reversing Art, so the combat master idolized him greatly. Thus, he had been cultivating based on the insights left behind by the other party.

However, he had kept the matter a secret from others, so how did the young man before him know about it?

"Combat Master Bai Mo was born with innate divine strength, and he specialized in water attribute cultivation techniques. Naturally, he was well suited to cultivate the River Reversing Art. On the other hand, you are of the earth attribute, and earth curbs water. Naturally, your improvement is significantly slower when you try to emulate Combat Master Bai Mo's actions. You can try cultivating the Compact Gaia Formula left behind by Combat Master Hong Jiang instead. In less than a month, you should be able to achieve a breakthrough!" Zhang Xuan said.

"Earth attribute? Am I not of the water attribute?" The combat master was visibly surprised by Zhang Xuan's words.

"You were born with the water attribute, but an earth attribute medicinal herb that you have consumed has resulted in earth becoming your dominant attribute instead," Zhang Xuan replied with a smile.

Even though one's constitution was predominantly decided at birth, under the right circumstances and with the right artifacts, it was still possible for it to change.

Such was the case for the combat master before him.

He had been born with the water attribute, but a certain medicinal herb that he had consumed unknowingly had ended up sealing his original water attribute constitution. As a result, his rate of cultivation had ended up slowing significantly, resulting in his seeming loss in talent.

"This..." The combat master was taken aback. In an instant, a thought seemed to strike his mind as he recalled something, and his body jolted. He immediately bowed deeply and said, "Sun shi, thank you for your guidance. You have truly opened my eyes."

In this moment, it was apparent to all of the combat masters that the young man before them wasn't just powerful—his eye of discernment had also reached an unbelievable level.

"Sun shi, I also face some problems with my cultivation..."

Seeing that two combat masters had benefited greatly from the young man's guidance, the eyes of the other combat masters lit up, and they charged forward in excitement.

"Everyone, there's no need to get anxious. I know that all of you are interested in knowing how you can increase the amount of zhenqi in your body, so why don't I conduct a lecture to impart my insights on the matter instead? Hopefully, it will prove to be of some use to you." Seeing that everyone had gathered around him, Zhang Xuan quickly calmed them down with a smile.

After everyone had settled down, he started his lecture. "In order to enhance the quantity of zhenqi in one's body, it is of paramount importance that one comprehends how a body contains zhenqi—the dantian! Only when the dantian is sufficiently large will one be able to store a greater amount of zhenqi..."

Zhang Xuan's voice was resounding, and small flowers began descending from the sky.

Combat masters were the strongest fighting force of the Master Teacher Pavilion, and they devoted their lives to protecting mankind from all threats. Naturally, Zhang Xuan would not turn them down.

After all, this was also part of his responsibility as a master teacher.

Even though they were going to be the opponents of the

Xuanxuan Faction during the exchange, in a sense, it would also be beneficial to the Xuanxuan Faction if their opponents were strong. Perhaps, it might motivate the members of the Xuanxuan Faction to work harder than ever.

After comprehending the Heart of a Teacher, the concept of lineage had already become blurred in his mind. He was no longer as fixated on the idea of 'my student' and 'the others' anymore. As long as the other party was of good character and was willing to learn, he would not hesitate to teach them.

...

"You are saying that... this was caused by Sun shi?" Standing within the Trial of Inner Breath, Division Head Wei widened his eyes in disbelief.

"That's right. It was still perfectly intact when Shi Hao left the area. It was only after Sun shi left that the area fell into such a state!" Xiao Bo quickly replied.

"The destroy all of the stone walls in a single palm and attain a score of 100... Just how much zhenqi does he have?" Division Head Wei's breathing hastened in agitation.

All along, he had thought that even if Sun shi was powerful and had formidable burst power, there was no way the amount of zhenqi that he had would be able to match up to normal combat masters, let alone a genius of Shi Hao's caliber. At that moment, he could not help but notice how naive his thoughts had been.

To devastate the trial with a single palm, the amount of zhenqi that Sun shi wielded had already reached an inconceivable level!

"I have no idea either, but with his strength, if we can convince him to join our ranks, our Combat Master Hall will be peerless among all of the Conferred Empire Combat Master Halls!" Xiao Bo said.

"You're right." Division Head Wei nodded.

Ever since the establishment of the Combat Master Hall, the highest record that anyone had achieved was 38 from Shi Hao. On the other hand, Sun shi, in a single palm strike, had managed to achieve a score of 100. At this rate, it was only a matter of time before he pierced a hole in the heavens!

Without a doubt, there was no combat master in any other Conferred Empire Combat Master Hall who could possibly possess such an astounding zhenqi reserve.

"Let's go. We'll invite him to join our Inner Breath Division!" The more Division Head Wei pondered over the matter, the more seduced he was by the idea. Thus, he immediately turned around and left.

"Division Head Wei, what do we about the trial then?" Xiao Bo asked anxiously.

He had been planning to take the Trial of Inner Breath right after Sun shi, only to find it devastated. Given that it had been utterly destroyed, the promotion system that had been put in place would fall apart!

"Don't worry about it. After we deal with Sun shi's matter, I will head to the Formation Master Guild and invite Guild Leader Han over to help us repair the trial's formation. While the formation is at grade-8, it shouldn't be too difficult for him to repair it once he studies the blueprint." Division Head Wei smiled.

He might be unable to fix the formation in the Trial of Inner Breath, but he could always engage the help of the local Formation Master Guild.

With Guild Leader Han's help, that should not be a problem at all.

"Alright, let's head out!" After explaining the matter, Division Head Wei left the passageway and headed to where he had left Sun shi previously. At the same time, he was deeply contemplating

which words he would use to convince the other party to join his Inner Breath Division.

But before he even arrived at his destination, he heard a calm voice echoing in the surroundings.

"... and that is the way to enhance the amount of zhenqi that you have!"

Raising his gaze, Division Head Wei saw the many combat masters of his Inner Breath Division bowing sincerely to Sun shi with reverence in their eyes.

Together, they exclaimed loudly, "Teacher, thank you for your guidance!"

Chapter 1126: Grand Constellation Finger

"Teacher..." Division Head Wei and Xiao Bo were startled.

They had only left for the Trial of Inner Breaths for a moment, so how in the world... did so many combat masters of the Inner Breath Division suddenly become Sun shi's students?

Didn't they acknowledge their teacher a little, no, way too fast?

Division Head Wei was utterly confused by the twist in the situation before him. He could not comprehend what was going on at all.

While combat masters were expected to obey the orders of their superiors, the relationship between division heads and the combat masters under them was similar to that of brothers. There was not a particularly strict hierarchy between them.

It was for this reason that Shi Hao and Xiao Bo had expressed themselves rather casually before Division Head Wei, not restraining themselves in the least.

For a teacher to suddenly pop out before those brothers all of a sudden...

He had been intending to bring Sun shi into the Inner Breath Division, but all of a sudden, the latter had become everyone's teacher. What the heck was going on?

Just as he was wondering what kind of sorcery Sun shi had cast over them, the young man suddenly shook his head and said, "There's really no need for this. Please rise. The path to cultivation is not one that should be walked in isolation. Only through trading insights and learning from one another will we be able to advance further. It's sufficient for us to speak to one another as peers; there's no need for you to address me as your teacher."

It was just a simple lecture from him, so he did not think that they would suddenly acknowledge him as their teacher. This had

left him in an awkward position.

"Sun shi's teachings are direct, and they point directly toward the essence of cultivation. I have benefited greatly from your guidance. Given so, it's only right for me to address you as my teacher. In fact, I am honored to have you as my teacher!" Shi Hao said.

As a renowned genius of the Combat Master Hall, it was inevitable that he was a prideful person.

Under normal circumstances, it would be hard to say whether even the hall master himself would be able to win his respect, and yet, he was showing such deep reverence for the man before him.

Not only did the other party enlighten him on the problems in his cultivation, more importantly, the guidance he had offered was truly full of wisdom, clearing the shadows veiling his eyes. As long as he absorbed all of the knowledge, he was certain that he would be able to advance his zhenqi capacity significantly to an unfathomable level.

Such valuable knowledge, and the other party had imparted it to him without any reservations.

Just this generosity in itself was sufficient to make him willingly address the other party as his teacher. This was how he felt deep in his heart as well.

"Indeed, Sun shi. We earnestly regard you as our teacher, so please don't turn us down!"

"With the knowledge that you have imparted to us, we'll surely be able to advance our cultivation swiftly. Clearing the examination will be a walk in the park!"

...

The others quickly nodded in agreement.

"This..." Division Head Wei was completely stunned.

It was a moment ago that he had wondered whether Sun shi had

used some kind of underhanded method to force the combat masters in the Inner Breath Division to become his students, but upon seeing this sight, it was apparent that it was an earnest gesture from the depths of combat masters' hearts.

He had only left for the Trial of Inner Breath for a moment... Just what in the world did Sun shi lecture on that won him the respect of so many people within this short period of time?

"Alright then..." Seeing that the combat masters were determined, even though Zhang Xuan was a little troubled by the matter, he eventually relented and nodded in agreement.

Just as he had said, he only regarded it as an exchange, and it was with this notion in mind that he had conducted a lecture for them. It was never his intention to accept them as his students, so he could not help but feel a little lost when all of them suddenly addressed him as their teacher.

It seemed like being too outstanding was a trouble as well. No matter where he went, everyone just wanted to take him as their teacher. How problematic!

"Division Head Wei, you have returned. Alright, let's head to the Martial Arts Division then!" Just as Zhang Xuan was a little unsure of what he should do at the moment, he suddenly saw Division Head Wei walking over, so he quickly grasped this opportunity to free himself from this slightly awkward situation.

"Alright then..." Division Head Wei nodded blankly. Without saying too much, he began leading Zhang Xuan toward the Martial Arts Division.

The Martial Arts Division was not far from the Inner Breath Division. It was only a short walk before they arrived at their destination.

"Division Head Feng is a good friend of mine. We have known each other for more than three hundred year now. As long as I

make a request on your behalf, he should allow you to browse through his collection," Division Head Wei said with a smile.

Division Head Feng used to be a renowned master teacher of the Qingyuan Empire Master Teacher Pavilion. He was skilled in all kinds of battle techniques, and his fighting prowess was terrifying. Eventually, Hall Master Xing personally invited him over, offering him the position as the head of the Martial Arts Division so that he could help groom generation after generation of combat masters.

Division Head Wei had already been acquainted with him before the other party joined the Combat Master Hall, and their relationship had only gotten closer since then.

A combat master stepped forward and said, "Reporting to Division Head Wei, our division head went out a moment ago, and he hasn't returned yet."

"He hasn't returned yet?" Division Head Wei frowned.

"I'm afraid so." The combat master lowered his head apologetically.

"When he returns, tell him that there's something I need his help on." Since Division Head Feng was not around, there was nothing they could do. Thus, Division Head Wei could only shake his head in disappointment.

"I'll relay your message to him, Division Head Wei," the combat master replied with a smile. "Actually, if Division Head Wei is seeking to borrow our division head's book collection, there's no need to wait for our division head to return. Our division head has stored most of the battle technique and cultivation technique manuals he has collected in the Trial of Martial Arts. As long as one successfully clears the trial, one will be granted access to that collection for as long as one wants!"

"Trial of Martial Arts?" Division Head Wei asked.

He rarely had time to come over to the Martial Arts Division, so

he was unsure of the various systems in place for it. On top of that, he did not recall the Martial Arts Division having a trial in the past.

"That's right. In the Trial of Martial Arts, the challenger will first pick a battle technique from among several hundred, and as long as you are able to defeat the puppet left behind by our division head while using the battle technique, you will be considered to have cleared the trial," the combat master explained.

Division Head Wei nodded in realization.

In a sense, it was a system that was strikingly similar to their Inner Breath Division's.

One should learn other battle techniques only after one had achieved a certain level of mastery in the battle technique one was currently practicing. After all, even if one were to learn a huge array of battle techniques, it would be completely meaningless if one could not use them effectively in battle.

"Sun shi..." Division Head Wei turned to seek Zhang Xuan's opinion.

"I don't mind giving the Trial of Martial Arts a try," Zhang Xuan replied with a smile.

Since he could access the books just by clearing the trial, there was no need for him to owe a favor to Division Head Wei over this minor matter.

"Alright, I'll lead the both of you over then!" The combat master smiled before leading the way forward.

Not too long later, they arrived at a vast hall. Similar to the entrance of the Trial of Inner Breath, it was crowded with combat masters. Most of them had grim expressions on their faces.

"This is the Trial of Martial Arts. The wall over there lists the names of the many battle techniques for the trial. As long as one is able to achieve Major Accomplishment in any one of them, one will be qualified to challenge the puppet our division head left

behind. After defeating the puppet, one will be able to enter the library and assess our division head's collection of books. Sun shi, are there any familiar battle techniques on the list that you see? If there are any, tell me and I'll register you for the trial!" the combat master said.

In the short talk they had while walking over, he learned that it was not Division Head Wei who wanted to browse through the books but the young man before him.

However, for the young man to be accompanied by a division head, he could not help but wonder what kind of identity the young man had.

"Let me take a look." Zhang Xuan nodded as he turned his gaze to the wall.

There were all kinds of battle techniques listed on it—'Thousand Leaves Palm', 'Fist of Red Thread', 'Asterism Finger'...

There was a huge variety, and making a swift count, there were actually more than two hundred techniques listed!

"There are so many of them?" Zhang Xuan was astonished.

"It's our division head's hobby to collect such manuals. Listed up there are all of the common Saint-tier battle techniques in Qingyuan Empire. Is there a technique that Sun shi specializes in?" the combat master asked.

"This..." Zhang Xuan suddenly felt a little awkward. "This is the first time I have heard of these battle techniques. I haven't practiced even one of them before."

These battle techniques were unique to Combat Master Hall and the Qingyuan Empire, and considering that it hadn't even been a day since Zhang Xuan arrived here, there was no way he could have heard of any of these battle techniques before, let alone practiced them!

The combat master was taken aback. "All of the easier Saint-tier

battle techniques in the Qingyuan Empire are listed up there. As a Saint 1-dan pinnacle cultivator, Sun shi... has never practiced any of them before?"

Of the two hundred or so battle techniques, 180 of them were straightforward and easy to master. Yet, to actually not know a single one of them... just how weak was he?

"I have only cultivated one Saint-tier battle technique so far, but it isn't among the two hundred techniques up there," Zhang Xuan replied with an embarrassed smile.

Most of his stronger battle techniques had come from the Hongyuan Empire, but none of them had reached Saint-tier yet. Only the Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm, which he had learned from the ancient domain, had reached Saint-tier, but even so, he thought that there were too many flaws in it, so he had not practiced it anymore afterwards.

"You have only learned one Saint-tier battle technique? And it isn't within the list?" The combat master glanced at Zhang Xuan with an inconspicuous hint of disdain in his eyes.

He had thought that the other party was a genius from some powerful clan, but who would have thought that he was an inexperienced greenhorn instead?

In the Martial Arts Division, combat masters who hadn't mastered at least three Saint-tier battle techniques would not even dare to walk with their heads up.

"That's right," Zhang Xuan replied. Following which, he pondered for a moment before adding, "Do you have any of the manuals for the battle techniques listed on the wall? I'll quickly learn one before challenging the Trial of Martial Arts."

He might not have learned any of the battle techniques listed on the wall, but it was not a problem at all. He could always just learn on the spot.

"You'll quickly learn one before challenging the Trial of Martial Arts?" The combat master nearly burst into laughter.

If it was not for the fact that the young man had been brought there by Division Head Wei, he would have berated the other party at this very moment.

Saint-tier battle techniques might have been commonplace in the Martial Arts Division, but any single one of them could easily be considered a trump card in a battle in the Qingyuan Empire.

It was true that most of the listed battle techniques were straightforward, but it would still take at least several years of practice before one could achieve Major Accomplishment in any one of the techniques and challenge the puppet.

Even the more talented geniuses of their Martial Arts Division would require at least two years of practice before they dared enter the Trial of Martial Arts. Yet, this fellow sure spoke big words. It sounded as if he would challenge the trial right after learning it on the spot.

Ignorance sure emboldened guts!

Pushing his displeasure back down, the combat master advised patiently, "I understand your desire to clear the Trial of Martial Arts, but mastering a battle technique isn't as easy as you think it is. Regardless of the battle technique, it will require diligent practice over numerous years before one can even come close to reaching Major Accomplishment."

"Thank you for your advice, I appreciate that. However, I think that it's worth a try. If you have a manual of any of the listed battle techniques, I hope that you can lend it to me for a moment," Zhang Xuan replied.

If he could compile the Saint-tier battle technique given by the other party with his current collection in the Library of Heaven's Path to create a Heaven's Path battle technique, he could still

consider cultivating it. Otherwise, there was no way he would waste his effort on it.

"You... Alright then!"

The combat master was going to fly to a rage after seeing how obstinate Zhang Xuan was on the matter, but noting that Division Head Wei was by the side, he could only suppress his rage. Flicking his wrist, he took out a book.

"This is the manual for Grand Constellation Finger that I am currently practicing. It's among the two hundred battle techniques on the wall, but I'll have to warn you that it might be a little difficult for you. I had to spend seven years on it before I was able to reach Minor Accomplishment!" the combat master explained with a hint of pride on his face.

"You took seven years to reach Minor Accomplishment in the Grand Constellation Finger?" Division Head Wei suddenly thought of something, and his eyebrows shot up. "Wait a moment, are you the genius of the Martial Arts Division whom Division Head Feng often speaks about, Jiao Tan?"

When they were looking for Division Head Feng, he had been the only combat master who happened to be in the vicinity, so they had approached him out of convenience to ask for the latter's whereabouts. As such, they were not aware of the other party's name.

However, upon hearing of the name of the battle technique and the duration the other party had taken to cultivate it to Minor Accomplishment, Division Head Wei suddenly recalled this matter.

The Grand Constellation Finger was definitely the most difficult to master out of the two hundred battle techniques listed on the wall, as well as the most powerful one. Even Division Head Feng had required 23 years before he could achieve Minor Accomplishment in the technique, but the other party had only taken seven years. His talent was truly frightening.

"Indeed, that's me!" Combat Master Jiao Tan nodded with an air of dignity around him.

Chapter 1127: Eleven Breaths

"I see!"

Upon learning that the other party was the famed genius of the Martial Arts Division, a figure who stood toe-to-toe with Shi Hao, Division Head Wei nodded before turning to Zhang Xuan. "Sun shi, let me get another battle technique for you. Mastering the Grand Constellation Finger won't be easy. Even among the two hundred battle techniques listed on the wall, it's considered one of the harder ones."

Considering that Division Head Feng was not a combat master and didn't receive the systematic training that they underwent before, it was not surprising that he had taken two decades to achieve Minor Accomplishment in the technique. However, Jiao Tan was the most talented individual of the Martial Arts Division of the current generation, and yet, he had still taken seven years to reach Minor Accomplishment. It was no wonder the Grand Constellation Finger was famed as one of the hardest battle techniques to master in the Martial Arts Division!

Zhang Xuan shook his head as he casually took the manual of the Grand Constellation Finger from Jiao Tan's hands and flipped through it. "There's no need to go through so much trouble; I'll just practice this one."

To him, as long as he could compile a Heaven's Path battle technique, it mattered not which of the two hundred battle techniques he practiced.

Knowing that he would draw hostility from the other party if he attempted to dissuade him too much, Division Head Wei conceded. "Alright then. If you wish to give up at any point in time, feel free to tell me. I'll bring you another battle technique."

Often, a cultivator had to try practicing the battle technique themselves before they would truly understand how difficult it was.

Once the other party stumbled on the technique, failing to even achieve Novice mastery quickly, he would finally understand how difficult the Grand Constellation Finger was.

Clearly, Jiao Tan also harbored the same thoughts in mind. He stared at the conceited young man before him intently, waiting to see the look of desperation on the other party's face once he realized that he could not comprehend the content of the manual.

However, his expectations did not come to be. Instead of desperation, he found himself looking at a face frowning in disgust.

"What do you mean by that?" Jiao Tan questioned in displeasure.

It was one thing for the other party to be unable to comprehend the manual, but what was with the look of disgust on his face? It was as if the other party thought that he was too good for their battle technique!

Zhang Xuan hesitated for a moment before replying, "It's nothing!"

After which, he turned his attention back to the manual in his hands, and a moment later, he sighed deeply and said, "Forget it. I guess there's no choice!"

With a look of resignation reminiscent of one who was ready to face death, Zhang Xuan closed his eyes.

"You..." Seeing how the other party's expression grew even more exaggerated than before, Jiao Tan felt so wrathful that he could have blown up on the spot.

The Grand Constellation Finger might not be a top-notch battle technique, but it was at least one of the stronger techniques in the Martial Arts Division. Normal cultivators would find it profound and difficult to cultivate, but they would still be honored to learn it. Yet... this fellow had a look of complete repulsion on his face, as if a fly had entered his mouth. That was really a little too much!

Jiao Tan harrumphed coldly. "What's with your poor attitude? Even if you can't comprehend the intricacies of the Grand Constellation Finger, surely you need not act in such a disrespectful manner..."

But before he could finish his words, a powerful aura carrying an air of antiquity and vastness suddenly burst forth from the young man before him. Following which, the young man suddenly raised his right hand and tapped at the space before him with his forefinger.

Tz la!

A burst of zhenqi tore across air, creating a deafening, piercing sound reminiscent of a piece of paper being torn into two. One could vaguely see stars rotating around the young man's fingertip, as if he had the world in his hands.

The Grand Constellation Finger was a technique created by an elder of the Combat Master Hall more than ten thousand years ago. That elder had carefully observed the movements of celestial bodies, and emulating the positioning of the stars with his zhenqi, he had created this finger art.

This technique was feared not only for its powerful physical might. The finger art carried the vastness of the universe within it as well, and those facing it would feel as if they were traversing through boundless space, exerting great pressure on their souls. As such, it was extremely difficult to guard against this attack.

However, it was also for the same reason that it was extremely difficult for ordinary cultivators to comprehend. There were even some who had dedicated their entire lives to it, only to remain oblivious to the power of the stars on their deathbed.

Jiao Tan's initial intention of offering the Grand Constellation Finger to Sun shi was because he could not stand the other party's arrogance and wanted to teach him some humility. However, upon seeing the burst of zhenqi from the other party's finger, his eyes

narrowed, and his body trembled. "This is... Novice?"

He had thought that the other party was just putting on an act in order to spare himself from the embarrassment of being unable to comprehend the battle technique, and yet, just after shutting his eyes for an instant, he had actually managed to achieve Novice mastery!

One must know that even Jiao Tan himself had taken an entire year to reach Novice mastery!

Tzzzzzzzz!

While Jiao Tan was astonished beyond measure, the zhenqi gathering on the young man's finger was swiftly growing stronger and stronger, to the point where a deep rumbling sound could be heard from the sheer accumulation of power. In that instant, Jiao Tan felt as if the entire room had turned dark, and the stars around him threatened to fall upon him.

"This is... Initiate?" Jiao Tan gulped down a mouthful saliva as his face turned completely pale.

The biggest hurdle in the Grand Constellation Finger lay in the initial phase, where one had to comprehend the power of the stars in order to draw upon the might of the technique. Once one overcame this challenge, the subsequent cultivation of the technique would be a little easier and faster. But even so, it was not supposed to be so fast!

How long did the other party take?

Ten breaths?

Five breaths?

Or only two breaths?

A tap of his finger, and the other party was already at Initiate. Before he could even begin to process what was going on, the other party was already at Initiate...

Is this even humanly possible?

Jiao Tan's felt his throat turn dry. He quickly turned his gaze to ask Division Head Wei just what kind of background the young man came from to be able to grasp the Grand Constellation Finger so easily, only to see Division Head Wei staring at the young man with bulging eyes as well.

Clearly, Division Head Wei had not expected the young man to be able to advance from Novice to Initiate that quickly either.

After all, this was something that defied common sense.

"Division Head Wei..." Fearing that he would interrupt the cultivating Sun shi, Jiao Tan opted to send a telepathic message over instead.

"Hmm?" Division Head Wei was jolted out of his shock.

"Has Sun shi... really not practiced the Grand Constellation Finger in the past?" Jiao Tan asked doubtfully.

Recalling the various incredible deeds the young man had achieved earlier, Division Head Wei contemplated for a moment before replying. "That should be the case. There's no need for someone of his caliber to lie about something as minor as this!"

A collaboration between the hall master and two division heads, and Sun shi was still able to escape unscathed. Not only so, he even managed to find an opportunity to tap into the formation of the Heart Division to subdue them. And just earlier, he had destroyed all ten stone walls in the Trial of Inner Breath with a single palm strike.

Surely a person of such great capability would not need to lie just to inflate his ego. It was more likely that the Grand Constellation Finger was simply easy to him.

"If he has not practiced the Grand Constellation Finger before and really managed to reach Initiate within just a few breaths... won't he catch up to my seven years of effort and reach Minor

Accomplishment in just a single day?" Jiao Tan uttered with widened eyes as his lips quivered in horror.

"Surely not. There's a huge rift between Initiate and Minor Accomplishment, so it shouldn't be possible for anyone to do it so quickly... Ah?"

Halfway through his words, Division Head Wei abruptly exclaimed in shock.

At this point, the young man had straightened his arm, and a vortex reminiscent of a revolving stellar river appeared at his fingertip. Just looking at that incredible mass of power rotating on the fingertip could easily leave one light-headed.

"Minor Accomplishment..."

The duo fearfully took two steps back.

It was just a moment ago that Division Head Wei had said that the other party would not reach Minor Accomplishment that day, but the next moment, he was forced to swallow his words.

Hu!

Upon achieving Minor Accomplishment, Zhang Xuan opened his eyes. He looked at the vortex of power gathered on his fingertip and sighed deeply before turning his gaze toward Jiao Tan.

"Does the Trial of Martial Arts only open to those who have achieved Major Accomplishment in their battle technique?"

Jiao Tan was not too sure why the other party was asking such a question, but he swiftly nodded in response. "That's right..."

Only one who had achieved Major Accomplishment in any of the two hundred battle techniques would stand a chance in the Trial of Martial Arts. Over time, this had become the prerequisite to challenging the trial.

Jiao Tan was just about to explain this matter to the young man when the latter sighed deeply and said, "I see..."

Following which, the young man closed his eyes once more.

"What?" Jiao Tan's cheeks twitched. "You aren't thinking of... pushing for a breakthrough to Major Accomplishment right now, are you? The Grand Constellation Finger is highly demanding on zhenqi, and a forceful breakthrough without prior preparation could easily result in severe internal injuries."

Once again, before Jiao Tan could finish his words, the young man raised his finger and tapped on the space before him once more.

Huala!

The air in the area was suddenly compressed tightly together. All of a sudden, Jiao Tan felt as if he was standing in the middle of the universe with innumerable stars around him. Each and every one of the stars was flying toward him with incredible momentum, threatening to crush his body into smithereens.

"Domain of Stars..." Jiao Tan's body trembled intensely. "This is... the level of mastery exceeding Major Accomplishment, Consummation?"

The mastery of a battle technique could be divided into five levels: Novice, Initiate, Minor Accomplishment, Major Accomplishment, and Consummation.

It was just a moment ago that he had said that reaching Major Accomplishment would be nigh impossible, and the following moment, the other party managed to reach Consummation with such ease.

It seemed like from the moment he came into contact with the manual till he cultivated to Consummation, all in all... only a dozen or so seconds had passed!

And he, the most talented individual of the Martial Arts Division, had spent seven years only to reach Minor Accomplishment.

An overwhelming sense of defeat left him feeling as if he would

explode on the spot.

There would be no damage if there was not any comparison.

Not knowing that his short moment of cultivation had scared Division Head Wei and Jiao Tan to the point that they were going to spew blood at any moment, Zhang Xuan opened his eyes.

Truthfully, if it was not for the collection of books within, he would never have lowered himself to cultivating the Grand Constellation Finger.

Even after compiling it with the finger arts in his Library of Heaven's Path, there were still five flaws in it!

He had never thought that he would cultivate such a flawed battle technique in his life. It was for this reason that he had such a conflicted expression on his face.

It was simply too hard to swallow this finger art!

This must surely be the darkest stain in his history of cultivation!

However, it could not be helped. He had to clear the Trial of Martial Arts to find more Saint 2-dan cultivation techniques in order to achieve a breakthrough. Otherwise, who knew how much longer it would take him?

It was fortunate that none of these flaws demanded a catalyst for him to cultivate the battle technique, or else he would have been in deep trouble.

Shaking away the frustrations in his mind, Zhang Xuan said, "I'm done. Combat Master Jiao Tan, I will have to trouble you to register me for the Trial of Martial Arts."

Most of the flaws were regarding the tearing the cultivator's meridians upon the execution of the technique, putting the cultivator in excruciating pain. However, with Zhang Xuan's Heaven's Path zhenqi, he could heal those tears swiftly, so it did not pose a problem.

In any case, he only required it to clear the trial. At most, he would just avoid using it in the future.

"Y-yes!" Jiao Tan finally recovered from his shock. Cowering back slightly, he quickly left the area. Not too long later, he returned. "Sun shi, I have negotiated with the combat masters in charge and gotten you the next slot for the trial!"

A large crowd would challenge the Trial of Martial Arts each day, but the number that would eventually pass the trial was very low.

Considering that the young man had been brought over by Division Head Wei himself, and he had already achieved the level of Consummation for the Grand Constellation Finger, it was not anything much to let him go first for the trial.

"Thank you for your help." Zhang Xuan clasped his fist in gratitude before following Jiao Tan forward.

The door to the trial happened to open at this moment, and a young man walked out with a gloomy expression on his face. With just a look, it was obvious that he had failed the examination.

"Sun shi, this way." Jiao Tan gestured into the opened doorway.

Zhang Xuan walked in, and in the blink of an eye, he had already disappeared from everyone's sight.

"Jiao Tan, just what is that fellow's background that you would intervene in his stead to give him priority in the queue?"

"I don't know either..." Jiao Tan shook his head.

"You don't know? Then, surely you do know what battle technique he is going to be challenging, right?" the combat master asked again.

Based on the reported battle technique, it was possible to deduce the other party's background.

"He's challenging the Grand Constellation Finger!" Jiao Tan said.

"Grand Constellation Finger? Isn't that the battle technique you

are cultivating at the moment?"

"I heard that that battle technique is incredibly difficult to master. Even someone as talented as you took seven years in order to reach Minor Accomplishment! For that fellow to dare challenge that battle technique, has he already achieved Major Accomplishment in it? But judging from his appearance, he doesn't look old enough."

The combat master from before frowned. "Given his young age, how long could he possibly have cultivated the technique?"

"Probably..." It was intended as a hypothetical question, but Jiao Tan happened to have the answer to it. With a bitter smile, he said, "Twelve breaths. Ah, no, it should be eleven breaths!"

Chapter 1128: Division Head Feng's Misery

Hu!

As soon as Zhang Xuan stepped through the door, a puppet at the very end of the room stood up.

Its appearance looked no different from a real person. With its snowy hair and beard, it resembled a human in his sixties.

Most likely, it's constructed in the form of Division Head Feng, Zhang Xuan deduced.

Division Head Feng was probably a celestial designer as well, which was not surprising since he came from the Master Teacher Pavilion in the first place. Otherwise, it should have been impossible for him to craft such a lifelike puppet.

If Zhang Xuan had not known in advance, he would have really thought that the figure before him was a true human.

"The battle technique you have chosen is the Grand Constellation Finger. If you are able to withstand my attack with just the Grand Constellation Finger, you will have cleared the trial. Otherwise, you'll have to leave and try again next time," the puppet said in an impassive tone.

"Alright." Zhang Xuan nodded as he took a step forward.

Pitting the same battle technique against a puppet of the same cultivation realm, even if he did not use his Eye of Insight and Library of Heaven's Path, he was still absolutely confident that he would be the one to emerge victorious in the very end.

...

"Reporting to Hall Master Xing, it appears that Division Head Wei has taken Sun laoshi to the Martial Arts Division."

Hall Master Xing and the others had led Elder Qi to the Inner Breath Division, but Zhang Xuan and Division Head Wei were

nowhere to be found. Thus, he had turned his sight toward Shi Hao, and he soon received his answer.

Hall Master Xing frowned. "What are they doing at the Martial Arts Division?"

"I'm not too sure either." Shi Hao shook his head.

"Hold on a moment. Did you just address Sun shi as... Sun laoshi?" The sharp Division Head Liao swiftly noticed that there was something amiss with Shi Hao's words.

Addressing Sun Qiang as Sun shi was a respectful way to refer to master teachers, but Sun laoshi meant something even deeper than that. It was a way to address one who had enlightened them greatly in their path.

"Yes, Sun laoshi has given us invaluable pointers in our cultivation; we are extremely grateful to him." Shi Hao nodded.

"This..." Hall Master Xing and the others glanced at one another and frowned.

It was one thing for a spirit awakener to provide pointers to combat masters, but to win the respect of so many of them and have them acknowledge him as their teacher simultaneously... Just what in the world had happened?

Soon, upon clarifying the situation, the trio was dumbfounded.

Destroying the Trial of Inner Breath with a single palm strike and subduing Shi Hao with just a finger... Just how much zhenqi did Sun shi possess?

"Let's head to the Martial Arts Division to take a look!" said Hall Master Xing, intrigued, before quickly making his way over to the Martial Arts Division.

Soon, he arrived at the entrance of the Trial of Martial Arts.

"You're all here!" At this moment, Division Head Wei suddenly noticed the old man standing alongside Hall Master Xing and

Division Head Liao, and his eyes lit up as he quickly clasped his fist respectfully. "Elder Qi, you are fine?"

"Un." Elder Qi nodded. "Where is Sun shi?"

"Ah, he just entered the trial," Division Head Wei replied with a smile.

"Trial?" Hall Master Xing frowned.

"Sun shi is trying to find some Saint 2-dan cultivation technique manuals, but there aren't any suited for him in the Inner Breath Division. Thus, we came over to look for Division Head Feng, but he happened to not be around. So, Sun shi decided to challenge the Trial of Martial Arts so as to gain access to Division Head Feng's collection of books!" Division Head Wei swiftly summarized the happenings.

Recalling when they faced the young man earlier and the astounding sight they had witnessed at the Inner Breath Division, Hall Master Xing stroked his beard and remarked, "With his strength, clearing the trial shouldn't be a problem!"

A genius of Sun shi's caliber would not face any trouble clearing the Trial of Martial Arts. There was no need to worry about him.

Hall Master Xing continued after a brief pause. "Speaking of which, didn't Division Head Feng return to the Martial Arts Division right after our conference? He usually spends his time cooped up within the Martial Arts Division, and there have been no reports saying that he has sneaked out like the others. It's a little weird that he isn't around here."

Except for collecting new cultivation techniques and battle technique manuals, Division Head Feng's greatest hobby was to isolate himself in his living quarters to study battle techniques. In fact, there were many times when Hall Master Xing had invited him to various formal occasions, only to be rejected for this reason. Considering how he did not defect to the Xuanxuan Faction like

Division Head Zhou and Division Head Wu, it seemed a little bizarre for him not to be in the Martial Arts Division.

"I was also wondering the same thing," Division Head Wei said.

He had been a little perplexed by the matter when he heard from Jiao Tan that Division Head Feng wasn't around. However, out of respect for Division Head Feng's privacy, he had chosen not to enquire too deeply into the matter.

"Old Feng actually willingly came out of his den? Why do I find that inconceivable? Wait a moment, could it be..." In the middle of his words, Division Head Liao suddenly recalled a matter and froze.

"What's wrong?"

Noting that Division Head Liao had thought of something, Hall Master Xing and the others quickly turned their attention to him.

"As you know, I have a close relationship with Old Feng. He regularly comes over to seek my help in clearing his inner demons. On one of these occasions, he told me that he has a bizarre habit." Division Head Liao spoke with twitching lips. "From time to time, he hides in the Trial of Martial Arts and pretends to be the puppet so as to assess his combat masters personally."

"Pretends to be the puppet?" Everyone was stunned.

They had not expected to hear such words.

"That's right. The Trial of Martial Arts is usually conducted by the puppet crafted by Old Feng, but facing multiple combat masters every single day, it inevitably accumulates damage and breaks down from time to time. In such cases, he suppresses his cultivation and acts as the puppet to battle with the challenging combat masters."

Gulping down a mouthful of saliva, Division Head Liao continued. "I only heard of this matter from him once though, so I took it as a joke. But... could it be true?"

A division head pretending to be a puppet in a trial was not a particularly shocking matter. Naturally, Division Head Feng would not tell such a matter to just anyone, so there were not many in the Combat Master Hall who knew of the matter. Or perhaps, Division Head Liao might even have been the only one aware of the issue.

For Division Head Feng to suddenly disappear despite there being no traces that he had left the Combat Master Hall... could he really be acting as a puppet in the Trial of Martial Arts at that very moment?

Hall Master Xing was stunned for a moment before asking anxiously, "What battle technique did Sun shi choose?"

Considering how dedicated Division Head Feng was toward the pursuit of battle techniques, there was no knowing if he would get serious with Sun shi! It would not be too much of a problem if Division Head Feng injured any of the combat masters—they would at least still be able to resolve it internally—but Sun shi was their esteemed guest!

"He chose the Grand Constellation Finger," Division Head Wei replied.

"That is indeed a powerful battle technique, but it's incredibly difficult to master as well. Sun shi actually managed to master such a powerful technique despite his age?" Hall Master Xing was stunned.

"He didn't know any of the battle techniques, so Jiao Tan offered him the manual of the Grand Constellation Finger, and... he learned it on the spot." Division Head Wei spoke hesitantly, unsure of how he should explain the matter to the others.

Before he could finish his words, Division Head Liao had already interjected in a panic. "He is going against Old Feng despite only learning the technique moments ago? You should have stopped him!"

"Old Feng is a lunatic, you know! If he learns that Sun shi is challenging the Trial of Martial Arts after just learning the fundamentals of the technique, he will think that the other party is disrespecting the solemnity of the trial and fly into a rage! You also know how seriously Old Feng takes the cultivation of battle techniques! This is really bad. Old Feng won't show any mercy once he is blinded by wrath. We have to rush in to stop him!"

At this point, Division Head Liao's eyes were widened in horror, and goosebumps rose all over his arms.

Division Head Feng, just like his surname 1 , was a true lunatic. He took everything relating to battle techniques seriously, and he would never allow anyone to sully it in the least. Given that Sun shi had just learned the Grand Constellation Finger moments ago, his lack of mastery would surely show through in the trial in an instant.

Once Division Head Feng realized the matter, he would spare no punches in teaching Sun shi a lesson! And against a raging Primordial Spirit realm expert, no matter how powerful Sun shi was, there was no way he could last too long against him

Jiya!

Panicking, Division Head Liao and the others quickly rushed toward the door of the Trial of Martial Arts to save Sun shi, but at that moment, the door suddenly creaked opened. A young man calmly walked out from the door.

As he walked, he leisurely adjusted his robe to tidy himself up.

Hall Master Xing and the others ran up to the young man, but upon seeing that the latter was completely unharmed, they couldn't help but ask in intrigue, "Sun shi... are you fine?"

"Un, I'm fine," Zhang Xuan replied with a smile.

"Have you... cleared the trial?" Division Head Wei asked.

"Un, it wasn't too difficult. However, I am really impressed by

how exquisitely the puppet is crafted. To fully emulate the situation in a true fight, it is even able to spurt blood! If I hadn't known in advance, I might have just thought that it's a real human."

"Spurt blood?"

Upon hearing those words, the lips of the crowd began twitching wildly.

"I was also as surprised as you are back when I saw it! However, as exquisite as it is, there are still some glitches in it that requires fixing. After I defeated it in a direct clash at the same cultivation realm using the same battle technique, I asked it if I have cleared the trial yet or not, but it did not reply to me. So, I could only continue the fight with it.

"As if that wasn't bad enough, its cultivation even started rising halfway through! I was afraid that I might be no match for it at that rate, so I made a preemptive strike and knocked it out. That should still be considered as a pass, right?" Zhang Xuan asked slightly worriedly.

"You knocked it out?"

"Its cultivation started rising halfway through?"

If they were still uncertain whether or not Division Head Feng was acting as the puppet before, Zhang Xuan's words had fully confirmed their doubts—the puppet had to be Division Head Feng!

The puppet in the Trial of Martial Arts was not weak, but its strength was fixed. There was no way its cultivation would suddenly rise in the midst of a battle! The only plausible explanation was that it was Division Head Feng in disguise!

"Let's go in to take a look!" Hall Master Xing and the others quickly bypassed Zhang Xuan and rushed into the trial, and with just a glance at the situation inside, their faces began twitching uncontrollably.

A bloodied Division Head Feng was smashed into the wall, and his clothes had been torn to shreds by some kind of devastating might. His current situation was as unkempt as one could imagine.

"It's indeed Old Feng..." Division Head Liao quickly rushed forward and placed his fingers on the other party's pulse, confirming that the figure before him was indeed a living human.

He flicked his wrist and swiftly popped a recovery pill into Division Head Feng's mouth. At the same time, he drove his zhenqi into the latter's body to help the latter assimilate the energy within the pill.

Not too long later, the unconscious Division Head Feng finally came to.

"What are all of you doing here?" Division Head Feng asked with a confused look.

"Were you assessing a young man earlier before... being knocked out?" Hall Master Xing asked hesitantly.

"Yes... that does seem to be the case. The young man who came in to challenge the trial earlier has a profound comprehension of the Grand Constellation Finger. Given the same cultivation realm and battle technique, I was no match for him at all! Intrigued, I discreetly raised my cultivation to see how far I could push him... but who would have thought that the fellow would suddenly rush over at that instant and knock me out with a flick of his finger? Then... then... I can't recall anything anymore..." Division Head Feng's face reddened.

It was not easy for him to meet someone who had achieved such incredible mastery in the Grand Constellation Finger. As a martial arts fanatic, it was inevitable that he would be fascinated by the matter. Wanting to witness the might of the Grand Constellation Finger in its full glory, he had attempted to push the other party a little further. But who could have expected that he would be knocked out before he achieved anything at all?

How embarrassing!

"You are really..." Hearing those words, Hall Master Xing could not help but sigh in vexation.

For an esteemed division head of the Combat Master Hall to be pummeled into such a tragic state by a mere Saint 1-dan fellow... Hall Master Xing really had no idea what to make of the matter.

However, recalling how he and another two division heads had been completely subdued by Sun shi back in the Heart Division at all, he realized that he was not really in a position to admonish the Division Head Feng either.

"Right, how did you know that I was in here? Also, who is that young man?" Division Head Feng asked curiously. "I don't think I have seen him around in the Combat Master Hall before."

While he did not know all of the combat masters in the Combat Master Hall, he could still recognize most of their faces. The face of the young man looked extremely foreign to him, so there was a good chance that he was not from their Combat Master Hall.

"He's a spirit awakener whom Hall Master Xing invited over to help enchant his Primordial Spirit," Division Head Liao explained.

"He's a spirit awakener?" Division Head Feng was stunned. "But he was able to overpower me easily even when the both of us were at the same cultivation realm. You are telling me that a spirit awakener has managed to attain such a deep comprehension of the profound Grand Constellation Finger?"

One must know that he was the head of the Martial Arts Division! With his deep comprehension of battle techniques, he wielded fighting prowess far surpassing his peers.

With such strength, it was nigh impossible for any cultivator of a lower cultivation realm to match him even when he had suppressed his cultivation to the other party's level. Yet, a spirit awakener had not only managed to subdue him but even easily

knocked him out when he attempted to raise his cultivation.

"It's the truth. Sun shi isn't just a spirit awakener but a master teacher as well. It's like this..." Seeing the look of disbelief on Division Head Feng's face, Hall Master Xing could only explain the various happenings earlier.

"This..." Division Head Feng's body stiffened in shock, not daring to believe what he had just heard. "Just eleven breaths after he looked through the manual of the Grand Constellation Finger, he has already attained a mastery in the technique that far surpasses what I have achieved in the past several hundred years?"

Seeing that Division Head Feng had his confidence utterly shattered, Hall Master Xing quickly stepped in to change the topic. "It's meaningless to judge true geniuses by our common sense. Come, I'll introduce Sun shi to you."

"Un." Division Head Feng sighed deeply before nodding.

The very moment that the group stepped out of the trial room together, they saw innumerable combat masters kneeling and kowtowing on the ground. Their excited and admiration-filled gazes were directed toward a young man not too far away.

"Teacher, thank you for opening our eyes!"

Chapter 1129: Saint 2-dan Heaven's Path

Divine Art

"This..."

Seeing even the most talented genius of his Martial Arts Division bowing to the young man, Division Head Feng was completely bewildered.

What in the world happened?

Aren't the combat masters of our Combat Master Hall supposed to be prideful individuals who never bow to anyone?

The young man left the trial just moments earlier, and all of them had already acknowledged him as their teacher?

Unable to stand it any longer, Hall Master Xing walked up to Elder Qi and asked, "Elder Qi, this... what is going on?"

"Sun shi imparted some pointers on how one could more effectively utilize battle techniques... and it was deeply enlightening!" Elder Qi replied with a face flushed crimson from agitation, and his fingers were trembling non-stop. It was as if even he was tempted to acknowledge Sun shi as his teacher as well.

"Just some pointers on effectively utilizing battle techniques have left them in such a state?" Division Head Feng could hardly believe what he was hearing.

Their Martial Arts Division had a huge collection of insights from preceding combat masters on how one could maximize the effectiveness of their battle techniques in battle, but most of them were conflicting with one another. Each of them made sense in their own ways, thus making it impossible to tell the correct insights from the incorrect. For Sun shi to win the reverence of everyone here just by lecturing a bit on the subject... Wasn't that a little too exaggerated?

"You are only saying that because you didn't hear the content of his lecture. Forget it, it'll be difficult to explain it to you at the moment. Just grab a combat master and ask him about the matter later on!"

Those who had not listened to the lecture would never comprehend how profound and novel that young man's interpretation of the subject was. Ignoring the confused Division Head Feng, Elder Qi rushed up to Zhang Xuan and clasped his fist respectfully.

"Sun shi, we meet again. Thank you for saving my life back in the Jingyuan City!"

Even though Sun shi had altered his appearance, there was not much change to his voice. Just by hearing him speak, Elder Qi was certain that the young man before him was the middle-aged man who had saved him back then.

"It's you! What are you doing here?" Zhang Xuan was surprised.

To his astonishment, the elder before him was the Eccentric Old Man whom he had met in Jingyuan City. Back then, the Eccentric Old Man had been plagued by a lethal poison, resulting in a languishing aura around him. However, in this moment, his face had a healthy red glow to it, and his aura felt more vigorous and livelier than ever. Had the other party not addressed him directly, he would not have believed that the person standing before him was actually the same old man he had met back then!

"It's all thanks to Sun shi's help. I was able to successfully make a full recovery after you cured my poison. Just a while ago, I successfully made a breakthrough, so I decided to return here to exact my vengeance!" Elder Qi replied.

Zhang Xuan nodded in realization.

Without a doubt, Elder Qi's poison was the result of someone's malicious deeds. Considering how long he had suffered under the

torture of the poison, there was no way he would be willing to let the culprit get away scot-free, especially since he had managed to regain his strength!

"Don't worry about it. I have already received your medicinal herbs as compensation, so we're even now," Zhang Xuan replied with a smile. Then, he turned to Division Head Wei and said, "I have defeated the puppet earlier, so I should have cleared the trial, right? May I trouble you to lead me to the book collection?"

"Of course!" Division Head Wei's lips twitched a little as he swiftly nodded.

Those who cleared the trial were able to access Division Head Feng's collection of books. As this was the rule Division Head Feng had set himself, there was no one who would complain about that. There was no need to trouble Division Head Feng over this matter.

Besides, if the other combat masters were to learn of this matter, Division Head Feng would probably die of embarrassment.

Following behind Division Head Wei, Zhang Xuan soon entered a library.

On the other hand, upon noting Zhang Xuan's departure, Hall Master Xing and the others hurriedly rushed up to Elder Qi and asked, "Elder Qi, is he... really the Sun Qiang you were talking about?"

The reason Elder Qi had hurried over so anxiously was to confirm whether the other party was the benefactor who had saved him previously.

"Un, he's definitely my benefactor. It doesn't seem like he's the Zhang Xuan person whom you were talking about!" Elder Qi nodded.

Given that he was acquainted with Sun Shi back at Jingyuan City, there did not seem to have been any need for the other party to disguise himself as another person back then. Going by this logic,

it did not seem likely for the other party to be Principal Zhang.

"Thank goodness!" Hall Master Xing heaved a sigh of relief.

Noting the other party's response, Elder Qi asked in bewilderment, "What's wrong? Do you have a conflict with Principal Zhang? He's well-respected in the Hongyuan Empire, and there's hardly any discredit to his name. Did he offend the Combat Master Hall in some way?"

Zhang Xuan's name was resounding in the Hongyuan Empire, to the extent that his reputation surpassed even that of Emperor Yu Shengqing. Countless youths regarded him as their idol.

Putting aside the many incredible feats and merits he had accomplished, there was not a shred of dishonor to his name. Given so, it should be safe to assume that he was a person of noble stature. Why would Hall Master Xing fear such a person so?

"There are no conflicts between us. It's a long story." Hall Master Xing realized that he had acted inappropriately upon hearing Elder Qi's question, so he quickly waved his hand.

Division Head Liao sent a telepathic message to Hall Master Xing. "Hall Master Xing, since it's confirmed that Sun Shi isn't Zhang Xuan, and considering his incredible talent and outstanding comprehension of battle techniques, if we could have him represent our Combat Master Hall in the exchange with the Xuanxuan Faction..."

Hearing those words, Hall Master Xing's eyes lit up.

Indeed. After witnessing it with his own eyes, even he had no choice but to admit that the Xuanxuan Faction was a formidable foe. He had been confident of victory given that he had achieved a breakthrough and obtained the highest secret art, Vitreous Heart Tempering Sutra, of the Combat Master Hall, but on second thought, there was still a huge gap between their combat skills. If the Combat Master Hall were to win by sheer strength and not

skill, it would not reflect too well on them either.

However, Sun shi was different.

In terms of combat skills, he could use a battle technique that he had learned moments ago to overwhelm Division Head Feng. In terms of state of mind, even the founder of the Heart Division had approved of him and willingly given him the highest control over the Heart Division's formations. In terms of zhenqi, he could shatter ten stone walls in the Trial of Inner Breath simultaneously. In terms of real fighting prowess, he could escape from a collaborative offense from the three of them.

No matter how one looked at it, Sun shi was an expert among experts. There were none who could rival him in the same level!

If they could have him represent the Combat Master Hall in the exchange against the Xuanxuan Faction, the reputation of the Combat Master Hall would surely be boosted significantly. At the same time, it would also immensely increase their chances in bringing the Xuanxuan Faction under them.

"That's a good idea!"

After another moment of deep contemplation, Hall Master Xing continued. "However... he's ultimately not from our Combat Master Hall. If we have him fight on our behalf and others learn of it... will the reputation of our Combat Master Hall be sullied?"

"That won't be a problem. We could have him represent our Combat Master Hall in the fight against Principal Zhang. If he wins, the Xuanxuan Faction will come under our Qingyuan Empire Combat Master Hall. Once that happens, not only will our reputation not take a dip, it will even soar to unprecedented heights," Division Head Liao said.

"You're right." Hall Master Xing nodded.

That was indeed the case.

If they could have the bunch from the Xuanxuan Faction join the

Combat Master Hall, their Qingyuan Empire's branch would surely grow stronger and stronger. With time, they might even become a powerhouse within the Alliance.

Even if the Xuanxuan Faction had complaints then, they could deal with it internally. It would not affect their overall situation.

"But... what if he loses?" Hall Master Xing was still a little worried.

Sun Shi was indeed a formidable opponent, but Principal Zhang was not a pushover either!

No matter what, he was the man who single-handedly groomed their potential Progeny of Combat, Zheng Yang, and he was also the man behind the overwhelming strength of the Xuanxuan Faction!

There was no way such a person like that could possibly be weak!

"If we lose, there will be no way around it. At the very most, our entire Combat Master Hall will join the Xuanxuan Faction!" Division Head Liao said grimly.

"This..." Hall Master Xing fell silent upon hearing those words.

"We have no other option at this point. Once it becomes known that Division Head Zhou, Division Head Lu, and the others have already defected to the Xuanxuan Faction, it will surely cause a huge uproar. With time, more and more combat masters will turn to the Xuanxuan Faction!" Division Head Liao said bitterly.

It was not that he wanted to do this, but they were truly cornered at this point.

In terms of overall prowess, the Xuanxuan Faction was definitely no match for the Combat Master Hall. However, their comprehension of combat had reached an unfathomable level; it was inevitable that the strength-seeking combat masters would be drawn to them.

Of course, this was not necessarily a bad thing. If the combat masters could learn from the Xuanxuan Faction, their fighting prowess would be brought up to a whole new level.

The only issue at the moment was who wielded the dominant position. If the Combat Master Hall was forced to be subservient to a lesser organization, they would become a laughingstock.

Given that this matter concerned the future of the Combat Master Hall, Hall Master Xing had to tread carefully regarding this matter. He thought deeply for a moment before eventually sighing in resignation. "You're right, we can only do it this way now. I'll talk to Sun shi about the mater later when he's done browsing through the books."

For the Combat Master Hall to be cornered by a lesser organization from a Tier-1 Empire, what a farcical situation they had found themselves in!

But that was indeed what was happening, so he had no choice but to face it.

It might seem absurd, but the Xuanxuan Faction could very well be the greatest crisis they had ever faced. The Xuanxuan Faction's superior combat skills and philosophy of impartation without discrimination were a bad match for the Combat Master Hall. Putting aside the division heads, if not for the fact that the pride and honor of the Combat Master Hall lay on his shoulders, Hall Master Xing would have rushed over to learn from them as well.

At this point, he could only wish for the best.

...

This is the library of the Martial Arts Division? What an incredible collection of books!

Unaware of the thoughts of Hall Master Xing and the others, Zhang Xuan's excited gaze was currently fixated on the innumerable shelves of books before him.

As expected of the Martial Arts Division, their collection was nothing short of impressive.

On top of the two hundred Saint-tier battle techniques listed for the Trial of Martial Arts, there were also tens of thousands of Spirit-tier battle techniques as well.

Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up in excitement. With these battle techniques, I might just be able to perfect the Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm into a Heaven's Path battle technique.

What he was lacking the most at the moment was high-tier battle technique manuals. With so many of them, he would be able to raise his comprehension of battle techniques up a notch, thus bringing his fighting prowess to another level.

Flaws!

Zhang Xuan swiftly laid his eyes on the first shelf and began collecting the books into his Library of Heaven's Path.

Hualala!

Books were appearing in the Library of Heaven's Path at an incredible speed.

Ten minutes later, Zhang Xuan had finally finished taking in all of the battle technique manuals.

There really is a substantial collection of Saint 2-dan cultivation techniques here!

After browsing through the battle techniques, Zhang Xuan turned his sight to the last few shelves and saw all kinds of zhenqi cultivation techniques. All in all, there were roughly several hundred of them.

There were also a couple of Saint 3-dan and Saint 4-dan cultivation technique manuals, but there were not too many of them, numbering only around four to five each.

Zhang Xuan swiftly glanced over them and collected them into

the Library of Heaven's Path as well.

Compile!

In the blink of an eye, three books appeared before Zhang Xuan's eyes—Saint 2-dan, Saint 3-dan, and Saint 4-dan.

He swiftly flipped through them.

I have finally managed to form the Saint 2-dan Heaven's Path Divine Art!

Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up in excitement as he heaved a sigh of relief.

Those hundreds of books had allowed him to perfect the Saint 2-dan cultivation technique. Unfortunately, there were still many flaws with the Saint 3-dan and Saint 4-dan cultivation techniques, so he could not cultivate them at the moment.

Nevertheless, he was satisfied.

I should just push for a breakthrough here, Zhang Xuan thought.

There was no one in the library, and it was extremely quiet. At the same time, he could not be bothered to find another place outside, so he headed to a corner and entered the Myriad Anthive Nest.

Considering his cultivation's strong foundation, his breakthrough would surely cause a commotion. How embarrassing it would be if he were to accidentally destroy the other party's library in the midst of doing so?

It would be safer for him to do it in the Myriad Anthive Nest.

In the Myriad Anthive Nest, he quickly found himself a quiet place before setting up a grade-7 Spirit Gathering Formation. Following which, he threw several thousand high-tier spirit stones in before sitting in the middle of it.

High-tier spirit stones were starting to become ineffective in his cultivation, so he needed a Spirit Gathering Formation to

maximize their effects. Otherwise, if he were to just absorb them normally, it would be difficult for him to build up the momentum required for a breakthrough.

Once all preparations were ready, Zhang Xuan went through the Saint 2-dan Heaven's Path Divine Art in his mind once more before devouring the surrounding spiritual energy greedily and swiftly converting them into zhenqi.

Saint 2-dan Spiritual Perception realm. At this level, cultivators would open their Incipient Eye, allowing them to perceive their surroundings more vividly than any of their other senses through their Spiritual Perception. While a breakthrough to this realm would not raise a cultivator's basic strength by too much, the enhanced perception of one's surroundings would allow one to make more precise movements in battle, and often, that could be the difference between victory and defeat.

This should be enough... Time to open my Incipient Eye!

With his eyes closed, Zhang Xuan's consciousness slowly crept into his dantian before eventually stopping before his golden Origin Core, which sat at the center of his dantian.

Chapter 1130: Knock His Teeth Out!

With a tense look, Zhang Xuan began to drive his zhenqi according to the Saint 2-dan Heaven's Path Divine Art.

A brilliant glow burst from his Origin Core, and it slowly began to revolve with increasing speed. An immense wave of spiritual energy gushed in from the surrounding formation, nourishing his Origin Core. In the blink of an eye, a vortex of spiritual energy reminiscent of a tornado had already formed above Zhang Xuan, producing a deafening whirring sound.

The process to opening one's Incipient Eye was extremely complicated, so Zhang Xuan dared not let his guard down. He controlled the immense amount of zhenqi flowing through his body with incredible precision, not leaving the slightest gap for error.

Hong long long!

As spiritual energy was gathering at a rate too fast, the Myriad Anthive Nest began to shake violently. The Ten Kings of the Cloud Mist Ridge looked over with astonished looks, unable to believe what they were seeing.

They had reached Spiritual Perception realm not too long ago, and from their experience, opening the Incipient Eye should not have caused such a huge ruckus. But why was it that such conventions did not apply to their master?

Not only so, they even felt a powerful pressure weighing down on them.

...

Being driven by the Heaven's Path Divine Art, the devoured spiritual energy was swiftly converted into the incomparably pure Heaven's Path zhenqi before being channeled toward the Origin Core.

Tzzzzzzzz!

Under the massive influx of zhenqi, the massive Origin Core slowly opened up, similar to a blossoming flower. A being reminiscent of an eyeball slowly emerged from within, and it looked as if it would open its eyes at any moment.

This was the crucial period, and Zhang Xuan knew it as well. Widening his pores as large as he could, he swiftly consumed all of the spiritual energy around him and gathered it all together, forming an incredible deluge similar to a rapid river.

"Open!" Zhang Xuan roared as a torrent of zhenqi surged toward his Origin Core.

In the breakthrough to Saint 2-dan, a cultivator had to channel his zhenqi toward his Origin Core to tear open the Incipient Eye. As long as the point that the zhenqi was channeled toward was correct, the Incipient Eye should open easily, thus unlocking the cultivator's Spiritual Perception.

Huala!

The torrent forcefully struck against Zhang Xuan's Origin Core, causing a brilliant light to burst from the latter as it revolved on the spot from the impact. However, it slowly came to a halt, and the seemingly opening Incipient Eye reverted back to its original shape, as if nothing had happened at all.

Why isn't it working? Zhang Xuan frowned.

He had strictly followed the Saint 2-dan Heaven's Path Divine Art for his breakthrough, and under normal circumstances, he should have opened his Incipient Eye easily. Yet, why was nothing happening at all?

Could there be a problem with his Heaven's Path Divine Art?

That was impossible!

Zhang Xuan took another look at his cultivation technique and

confirmed that there were no flaws in it. Just to double check, he examined every single sentence carefully, and there was not a single mistake in any one of them. Frowning, he thought, I should give it another try.

Hong long!

Spiritual energy gushed into Zhang Xuan's body once more, and after it was successfully converted into Heaven's Path zhenqi, it was channeled toward his Origin Core.

Bam!

After the powerful collision of the zhenqi, Zhang Xuan's Origin Core began spinning once more. However, just like before, it stopped not too long after and fell silent.

Zhang Xuan was bewildered. This...

His cultivation had always progressed smoothly all along, and not once had he failed in pushing for a breakthrough before. But this... He had already attempted it twice, but it still was not working!

That could not be right.

There was no flaw in his cultivation technique, and the amount of zhenqi that he had was sufficient as well.

Let me give it another try!

Frowning, Zhang Xuan attempted to push for another breakthrough.

...

Some time later, Zhang Xuan finally came to a halt. He was panting heavily at the moment, and there was a bitter smile on his face.

I finally get it. There's no mistake the cultivation technique, and I didn't comprehend it incorrectly either. It's that my Origin Core is too powerful, and the spiritual energy within high-tier spirit

stones isn't pure enough to stimulate it. That's why I wasn't able to open my Incipient Eye!

After multiple tries, Zhang Xuan had finally managed to make sense of the situation.

It was not that there was a problem in his cultivation; his Origin Core was simply too powerful.

The Origin Core formed from the Saint Ascension Decipher was too stable, and it had been further refined in the Saint Ascension Ordeal, which created a layer of sacred energy around it. To make a comparison, the sturdiness of his Origin Core was roughly at the level of a Saint intermediate-tier artifact. The purity of the spiritual energy within high-tier spirit stones was insufficient to break it open!

Zhang Xuan rubbed his glabella in distress as he halted the formation and stood up once more. I must find an even purer source of spiritual energy.

He had encountered such a problem before. As his cultivation rose, his requirement for spiritual energy steadily increased as well. There was a time when his cultivation could be advanced greatly with just low-tier spirit stones, but before long, he had found himself needing middle-tier spirit stones, then high-tier spirit stones... and now, even high-tier spirit stones were not sufficient.

This was not a problem of quantity but quality.

If the quality did not meet the minimum requirement, no amount of quantity could make up for it.

Previously, he had already felt high-tier spirit stones becoming less and less effective on his cultivation, and the quantity he needed for each breakthrough was increasing exponentially. Nevertheless, he had thought that it should still suffice for a few more realms... but it seemed like he had been too optimistic.

The Combat Master Hall must have purer spirit stones. Let me see if I can purchase some from them.

While Zhang Xuan was helpless before this matter, the Combat Master Hall might just be able to resolve the issue.

After all, the Combat Master Hall was an organization that the Master Teacher Pavilion heavily invested in so as to create powerful experts to protect mankind. As such, they never lacked resources. This was also why he had sent Zheng Yang to the Combat Master Hall headquarters to vie for the position of the Progeny of Combat.

If Zheng Yang successfully cleared the trial, through tapping into the vast resources and complete heritage of the Combat Master Hall, he would likely be able to advance his cultivation at an astounding speed.

And more importantly, this was a good opportunity to temper his state of mind too.

Let me ask Hall Master Xing about the matter then, Zhang Xuan thought.

As long as he could obtain even purer spirit stones, he would be able to make a breakthrough to Spiritual Perception realm easily. However, such spirit stones were bound to be extremely valuable and rare. Nevertheless, he had no intention of taking them for free. As long as the Combat Master Hall was willing to sell them to him, he would surely pay a price that could satisfy them.

After leaving the Myriad Anthive Nest, Zhang Xuan swiftly left the library and entered the main hall of the Martial Arts Division, where Hall Master Xing happened to be waiting.

Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up, and he quickly walked up to him. "Hall Master Xing, it's great that you are here. I happen to have a matter that I need to trouble you on."

"Hmm? Sun shi, feel free to state your request. There's no need to

stand on ceremony with me. As long as it's something within my means, consider it done!" Hall Master Xing swiftly responded in delight.

He had just been wondering how he could convince Sun shi to help him with the matter of the Xuanxuan Faction when the latter suddenly said that he had a request.

After everything that Sun shi had done for their Combat Master Hall, mending his Primordial Spirit and gifting the altered Vitreous Heart Tempering Sutra back to them, he wasn't in a good position to ask the latter for another favor. However, if Sun shi had a request to ask of them, that would make things easier for him.

"It's actually like this... I need a spirit stone that is even purer than a high-tier spirit stone for my cultivation, and I would like to enquire if your Combat Master Hall has any. If so, I am willing to pay any price to purchase it!" Without beating around the bush, Zhang Xuan dived straight to the main point.

"This..." Hall Master Xing was slightly taken aback. "If you are seeking pinnacle spirit stones, that is a commodity that only those of Saint 6-dan and above are qualified to use, so I'm afraid that it will be nigh impossible to find even one of those in the Qingyuan Empire. You will have to head to a higher tier empire than that!"

"Qingyuan Empire Combat Master Hall doesn't have any pinnacle spirit stones?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

"Regretfully, that's the case." Hall Master Xing shook his head. At this moment, he suddenly recalled something and said, "Actually, if you don't mind, we do have some concentrated high-tier spirit stones. The spiritual energy contained within them is indeed significantly purer than ordinary high-tier spirit stones, so perhaps they might just work for you?"

"Concentrated high-tier spirit stones?" Zhang Xuan was bewildered.

He had never heard of such a thing before.

"Un. High-tier spirit stones can be mined from ordinary spirit veins, but concentrated high-tier spirit stones are only found in the more potent spirit veins that produces pinnacle spirit stones. In terms of purity, they are nowhere near pinnacle spirit stones, but there is no doubt that they are still much purer than high-tier spirit stones. It's for that reason that they are known as 'concentrated high-tier spirit stones'," Hall Master Xing explained.

Zhang Xuan nodded in realization.

Spirit veins could be divided into several levels, too. Some of the weaker spirit veins could only produce the inexpensive low-tier spirit stones, whereas those truly formidable ones could produce pinnacle spirit stones at their very core.

In those spirit veins that could produce pinnacle spirit stones, due to the incredible concentration of spiritual energy, even the outskirts of the spirit vein would produce spirit stones, and their quality far exceeded that of ordinary high-tier spirit stones.

"May I know how many concentrated high-tier spirit stones the Combat Master Hall has? If possible, I would like to purchase some," Zhang Xuan quickly replied.

Since concentrated high-tier spirit stones were purer than ordinary high-tier spirit stones, they just might prove useful in helping him achieve a breakthrough to Saint 2-dan realm.

"In truth, even our Combat Master Hall doesn't have too many concentrated high-tier spirit stones. All in all, we only have ten of them. However, if Sun shi requires it, we can give five of them to you!" Hall Master Xing said.

"That would be imposing too much on you. How much do they cost? I'll just buy them from you," Zhang Xuan replied.

If he were to accept a favor from the other party, he would probably have to pay it back somehow in the future. Since he was

not in any lack of money, there was no need for him to owe such a debt to others for the sake of saving money.

Hall Master Xing hesitated for a moment before speaking. "To be honest with you, there's something that we need Sun shi's help on. If you can help us with this matter, we will be more than glad to give the five concentrated high-tier spirit stones to you!"

"May I enquire what it is?" Zhang Xuan was bewildered.

The Combat Master Hall was one of the strongest organizations in Qingyuan Empire, and Hall Master Xing had even recently made a breakthrough to the Leaving Aperture realm. It was really a little unexpected to hear that they would require his help.

"It's regarding the trouble that I mentioned to you not too long ago," Hall Master Xing said with an unsettled look.

"Oh?" Zhang Xuan's interest was piqued.

"It's a little embarrassing, but that trouble is caused by a single cultivator. That cultivator's cultivation isn't too high, but he wields incredible fighting prowess. I fear that given the same cultivation realm, there are none in our Combat Master Hall who are a match for him!" Hall Master Xing sighed deeply as he spoke with a vexed tone.

He had done a rough gauge, and even he would struggle to face Principal Zhang's direct disciples given the same cultivation realm. It was likely that the teacher would be even stronger than that.

"If the cultivation of that cultivator who is causing you trouble is not too high, why don't you just find someone to pummel him secretly? Surely it should suffice for you to scare him off? The Combat Master Hall isn't as rule-bound as the Master Teacher Pavilion, so such should be fine, right?" Zhang Xuan asked.

The Combat Master Hall served a differing function as the Master Teacher Pavilion. The Master Teacher Pavilion served as the teachers of humanity, so naturally, they had to be role models for

others, so it was inevitable that there would be many rules surrounding it. On the other hand, the Combat Master Hall served as the military of humanity, so it was not necessary for them to be as rule-bound as the Master Teacher Pavilion.

Besides, since the other party dared cause trouble despite his lack of strength, it should be well within the rights of the Combat Master Hall to retaliate. If he was the hall master, he would have had that cultivator pummeled into the ground first before talking the matter out.

Was there a need for them to be so vexed over the matter?

"Cough cough..." Hall Master Xing choked on his saliva. "That cultivator happens to be a master teacher..."

"He's a master teacher?" Zhang Xuan stroked his lower jaw and frowned. "There could be troublesome repercussions if such forceful methods were to be used against a master teacher. However, that should not be a problem either. Master teachers are bound by many rules, so you can use that against him. For one, you could challenge him on something that he is not proficient in and force him to back down. Alternatively, you could bring in the Master Teacher Pavilion to mediate in the matter. If he still refuses to budge then, you could just capture him and have him sent to the Subterranean Gallery!"

Master teachers were protected by the Master Teacher Pavilion, so it would be difficult to deal with him directly. Nevertheless, given the considerably close ties between the Combat Master Hall and the Master Teacher Pavilion, it should be possible to deal with the other party through bureaucracy.

Since the other party was not too strong, he was likely just a 6-star master teacher. Even if he had powerful fighting prowess, his standing in the Master Teacher Pavilion was unlikely to be very high. Any higher ranked master teacher would be able to subdue him easily.

Zhang Xuan had been placed in such a situation several times himself, so he was rather familiar with it.

Surely, there was no need for Hall Master Xing to worry so much about this matter.

"If only it were that simple..." Hall Master Xing shook his head and sighed. "The other party is an upstanding and reputable master teacher, so we dare not go too far with him. That's why we wish to invite Sun shi to fight in our stead. His cultivation realm is at the same level as yours, and with your means, we believe that you should be able to defeat him with ease!"

"You want me to fight him in your stead?" Zhang Xuan smiled confidently. "That isn't a problem at all! I have never lost in a fight against a peer before! Don't worry, I'll help you knock all of his teeth out! He'll regret having messed with the Combat Master Hall."

Chapter 1131: Spiritual Perception Realm!

His current strength was nothing in Qingyuan Empire, but in terms of matching his peers, he had absolute confidence at victory.

Regardless of who it was, well, perhaps excluding that monster of a clone he had, as long as the other party was of the same cultivation realm as him, he was confident that he could have the other party crying for their daddies and mummies at the end of the duel.

To dare to cause trouble in the Combat Master Hall, he sure was brazen!

As long as I, Zhang Xuan, am around, regardless of which hole you have crawled out from or how formidable you might be, there won't be a shred of arrogance left once I am done with you!

"With Sun shi's promise, I am reassured..." Hearing those words, Hall Master Xing heaved a sigh of relief as a smile appeared on his lips.

Despite possessing only a cultivation of Saint 1-dan pinnacle, Sun shi was able to dodge the simultaneous attack from three of them. The great strength he possessed was undeniable. No matter how powerful Principal Zhang may be, he definitely wouldn't be walking out of a duel with him unscathed.

"However, Sun shi, you still have to be careful. That trouble I told you is said to be an invincible existence in his cultivation realm. Even though I haven't really witnessed his strength in person or not, the many rumors that surround him suggest that he isn't any weaker than you!" Hall Master Xing hesitated for a moment before saying.

He was deeply confident in Sun shi's strength, but the opponent wasn't easy either. It was best to proceed carefully.

"He isn't any weaker than me?" Zhang Xuan was slightly taken

aback for a moment before nodding.

It was surprising to hear that there was someone who was able to match him in the same cultivation realm, especially since he cultivated the Saint Ascension Decipher and successfully ascended to become a Celestial Saint. However, considering the immense size of the Master Teacher Continent, there might just be true geniuses who could match him.

His clone was one such example... Despite being of the same cultivation realm, he didn't recall a single occasion where he could defeat his clone in battle. It was truly frustrating.

Considering how wary Hall Master Xing was regarding the matter, the other party's strength was likely to be truly frightening. It seemed like he had met his match this time around.

"Indeed. I have never met the other party in person, but just the fighting prowess of his students is already plenty frightening. At the same cultivation realm, even I would struggle to match them. Thus, Sun shi, you mustn't underestimate your opponent..."

"Even you would struggle to match the other party's students?" Zhang Xuan was astonished.

It was already incredible for the other party to be powerful, but who could have thought that the other party's students would be so formidable as well. At this point, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but feel intrigued by the other party.

"Interesting. I'll be looking forward to meeting him then..." Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

If he could fight against such a talented master teacher, it might give him some inspiration as to how he could further his fighting prowess.

"Sun shi, we have appointed a duel with the other party earlier, and it would be held a few days from while. Meanwhile, why don't you cultivate in our Combat Master Hall and further your fighting

prowess? Each of our Ten Divisions has complete heritages, and they might prove to be of some use to you in further developing your strength." Hall Master Xing said.

Given how quickly the other party had managed to cultivate the Grand Constellation Finger, he should be able to master the other expertise of their Combat Master Hall swiftly too. With the future of the Combat Master Hall at stake, they couldn't afford to take any risk. As long as it was something that could boost their chances at victory, they would have to grasp tightly onto it.

"It would be a pleasure!" Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

He happened to be looking towards furthering his Heaven's Path Fist Art, Heaven's Path Palm Art, Heaven's Path Movement Art, and the such at the moment, and the high-tier battle techniques of the Combat Master Hall was indubitably an invaluable asset for that. This was a precious opportunity to learn, so naturally, he wouldn't turn it down.

"Here is a token which represents my authority. With this in hand, you will be able to challenge any trial and enter any library in the Combat Master Hall freely!" Seeing how the other party was still able to remain humble despite his astounding strength, Hall Master Xing nodded in approval.

After which, he flicked his wrist and tossed a token over.

Zhang Xuan casually caught it.

After which, Hall Master Xing flicked his wrist once more and took out a slender but long jade container before explaining, "Here are the five concentrated high-tier spirit stones, I'll pass them to Sun shi first as well. This battle is truly important to our Combat Master Hall, so I wish you luck in furthering your strength."

"Thank you." Not expecting to receive the spirit stones ahead of the battle, Zhang Xuan felt deeply grateful.

Since the other party trusted him so much, he had to return the

favor and help the other party resolve their problem at its root. At the very least, he would pummel that troublemaker to the point where he would be unable to even manage his day-to-day functions!

The Combat Master Hall wasn't an organization that likes of his could trifle with!

...

Sitting quietly in an isolated chamber, Zhang Xuan quickly conditioned his current state to the peak before taking out the long jade container.

Right after giving Hall Master Xing his word, he quickly entered an isolated chamber to cultivate.

With the concentrated high-tier spirit stones in hand, it was about time for him to push for a breakthrough!

With a swift flick of his finger, the seal on the jade container vanished, and incredibly pure spiritual energy immediately began wafting from the container.

Placed within the container were five crystalline spirit stones. Transparent, Zhang Xuan could see the many streaks of pure spiritual energy flowing to and fro within it like little dragons. It felt as if they would burst out from the spirit stones at any moment and soar into the sky.

The spiritual energy within is indeed much purer than high-tier spirit stones... Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

Through his observation, he could tell that the purity of the concentrated high-tier spirit stone was at least twice the level of ordinary high-tier spirit stones. With it, he would definitely be able to overcome the Saint 1-dan bottleneck with ease.

Alright, time to begin!

Whipping out a spirit stone and grasping in his hand, Zhang

Xuan closed his eyes.

Boom!

Pure spiritual energy immediately began surging into his body, and they were swiftly converted into Heaven's Path zhenqi.

As ordinary high-tier spirit stones were simply not pure enough for the current him, he was only able to absorb an average of 10% of the spiritual energy within. On the other hand, using the concentrated high-tier spirit stones, he found that he could absorb nearly 100% of the spiritual energy within. The conversion efficiency was truly at a wholly different level.

To put it in other words, the effects of a single concentrated high-tier spirit stone was far greater than even several thousands of high-tier spirit stones combined!

Hu la!

In the blink of an eye, the newly-converted zhenqi finally arrived before Zhang Xuan's Origin Core. With his previous experiences in attempting for a breakthrough, his movements were extremely smooth. With a thought, he had all of his zhenqi gushing towards his Origin Core like a furious torrent.

Geji! Geji!

Under the relentless striking of the torrent, the incredibly sturdy Origin Core finally began to open. However, barely after opening a slit, Zhang Xuan already felt that his zhenqi was running dry. If he were to stop at this juncture, it would render his previous efforts futile.

"Continue!"

At this crucial period, Zhang Xuan couldn't afford to stop. Without any hesitation, he picked up another concentrated spiritual energy and began absorbing the energy within.

Hong long!

A long time later, the sturdy Origin Core finally broke open. An object reminiscent of an eye sat in its place, illuminating the surroundings.

Along with the opening of the Incipient Eye, Zhang Xuan felt his consciousness suddenly extending beyond himself, into the surroundings. In the blink of an eye, every nook and cranny within the chamber lay bare before his consciousness.

Minor details which he would only notice with just his Eye of Insight previously, they could all be vividly felt by him at this very moment. Those books in the distance, even if he didn't open them, he could still 'see' the content within each and every page.

This is Spiritual Perception? It is truly a powerful ability! Zhang Xuan's face flushed in agitation.

Through the means of the soul oracle, he was also capable of scanning his surroundings with his soul energy. What was different about it and the Spiritual Perception was that the Spiritual Perception amplified what he could see by manyfold, as if someone had fitted a magnifier before his senses. Even the most minor of details could be perceived by him with astounding clarity.

It was no wonder why a breakthrough to Spiritual Perception realm would result in a huge leap in one's fighting prowess despite the minimal increase in zhenqi and strength. Just by opening one's Spiritual Perception in battle, a cultivator would be able to perceive every single move made by his opponent, allowing him to easily dodge, retaliate, or even predict the future moves that his opponent would make.

If I had the Spiritual Perception previously, I would have been able to flee from Hall Master Xing and the others with greater ease previously. It wouldn't have been such a close shave each time around... Zhang Xuan thought as he exhaled a mouthful of turbid gas.

While he did manage to successfully flee from the combined

assault of Hall Master Xing and the others earlier one, it was by a hair's breadth every single time. This was due to a lack of his grasp over his surroundings. His attention had to be fixed on dealing with the assault he was currently facing, leaving him unable to effectively perceive the movements of the other two to guard against them. This had left him in a truly bad position.

With his Spiritual Perception, if he were to find himself in such a position once more, he would be able to make the better decisions in view of his overall circumstances, and his escape would surely have been far smoother.

Continue!

The breakthrough alleviated the deep pressure that Zhang Xuan was feeling within from his students swiftly closing up to him. Heaving a sigh of relief, he picked up another concentrated high-tier spirit stone and began driving his zhenqi once more.

Spiritual Perception realm primary stage!

Spiritual Perception realm intermediate stage!

Spiritual Perception realm advanced stage!

Spiritual Perception realm pinnacle!

Within an hour, his cultivation had soared to Saint 2-dan pinnacle. However, at the same time, the five concentrated high-tier spirit stones had been completely depleted as well, reducing to mere white powder.

Let me see how far I can extend my Spiritual Perception for! With such a thought in mind, Zhang Xuan began concentrating on expanding his consciousness.

According to the records on books, depending on the cultivation technique one cultivated, the area where one's Spiritual Perception could cover would differ as well. A typical Spiritual Perception realm pinnacle expert would generally be able to expand his Spiritual Perception over a radius of 400 meters or so.

Those who were stronger could reach 500 to 600 meters, but there was nearly no one who could reach the 1000 meters mark.

Given that he had cultivated the Saint Ascension Decipher and Heaven's Path Divine Art, he was interested to see how he compared to other cultivators.

Hu la!

Extending his Spiritual Perception outward, it swiftly crept beyond the isolated chamber.

400, 500... Zhang Xuan counted mentally.

In the blink of an eye, it had already reached the 500 meters mark.

1000, 2000...

Zhang Xuan thought that 1000 meters should be where his limit lay, but he found that he could continue to push it forward with relative ease. Eventually, it was only at the 2500 meters mark where he found that he had reached his limit.

2500 meters, that's roughly six times more than that of ordinary cultivators... Zhang Xuan thought excitedly as he retracted his Spiritual Perception,

He knew that his Spiritual Perception was bound to be powerful due to the strength of his Heaven's Path Divine Art, but he hadn't expected that it would be such an extent.

One must know that the space that one's Spiritual Perception covered increased exponentially along with the increase in radius, so expanding one's Spiritual Perception was an increasingly difficult task. In terms of the space covered, Zhang Xuan was more than two hundred times more than an ordinary cultivator!

With such a wide Spiritual Perception, he could easily notice the movement of anyone in the vicinity, making it difficult for anyone to spring an assault on him in battle.

On top of that, it seems like the keenness at which I can perceive my surroundings is far above that of other cultivators too. Zhang Xuan noted as he exhaled deeply.

This matter was truly too astonishing. If he were to speak of it, who knew how many cultivators would be scared to death.

As per his usual practice, it would be best for him to maintain a low profile.

The Combat Master Hall is indeed worthy of its title as one of the strongest organizations in Qingyuan City!

With even just a swift scan, Zhang Xuan found that the Combat Master Hall was filled with innumerable powerful formations which could easily kill even Primordial Spirit realm experts upon contact.

It was fortunate that he had strictly instructed Ruohuan gongzi and the others to keep those of the Xuanxuan Faction in check. Otherwise, if they were to cause trouble here, the consequences could be dire.

With my breakthrough to Spiritual Perception realm, I should be able to match Primordial Spirit realm experts now.

While Zhang Xuan's strength hadn't risen with his breakthrough to Spiritual Perception realm, his fighting prowess did increase significantly. In the past, he could only subdue Primordial Spirit realm cultivators through springing sudden assaults, but with his newfound strength, even Spiritual Perception realm experts would struggle to bring him down in a fair battle.

But of course, he would still do well to steer clear from Leaving Aperture realm experts like Hall Master Xing.

Still, just cultivating a single realm has taken me five concentrated high-tier spirit stones. Without a doubt, the need for spirit stones in my cultivation will only continue to increase... I really have to find a way to earn money... Staring at the white

powdery remains on the ground, Zhang Xuan rubbed his glabella in vexation.

Just when he thought that he had become a tycoon after slaying the Ten Kings of the Qingtian Lineage, a short moment of cultivation had put him back into his place as a poor bloke.

He really had to find a way to acquire more concentrated high-tier spirit stones, or else his cultivation would stagnate once more.

Forget it, I'll deal with it later. For the time being, I need to deal with the trouble Hall Master Xing spoke of first. Let me head to the Fist Division, Palm Division, and Footwork Division to see what they have... Given how generous Hall Master Xing had treated him, it was only right for him to reciprocate the favor.

This was how diplomacy usually worked, and as the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, the Combat Master Hall was an ally he would want to bring over.

Understanding this, Zhang Xuan walked out of the isolated chamber and headed to the Fist Division.

Chapter 1132: Three Days Later

Hualala!

The crisp melody of tea flowing into a cup filled a tranquil room.

Hall Master Xing placed the teapot in his hands down before passing the fresh cup of tea over.

Elder Qi took a sip of it, and his eyes immediately lit up. "Excellent tea! It's no wonder it's worth such a huge sum. Its quality is definitely worth the fortune spent on it!"

Hall Master Xing had specially bought these Cloudmist Flower tea leaves from the Hongyuan Empire. Back then, he had thought that it was a little pricey, and he had only intended to give it a try. However, upon tasting it, he realized that it was really worth its price.

"It sure is fine tea, isn't it?" Hall Master Xing nodded in agreement as he sipped on his.

Over the past three days of hard work, he had managed to further reinforce his cultivation, bringing his state of mind and Primordial Spirit to a whole new level.

At this rate, he would be ready by the time the lightning ordeal fell.

Looking at the elder before him, Hall Master Xing asked, "Elder Qi, how has your cultivation been going recently?"

"The Combat Master Hall's Spirit Gathering Formation is indeed formidable. After cultivating for just half a day, I managed to reinforce my Half-Leaving Aperture realm cultivation," Elder Qi said with a stroke of his beard.

He had to admit that the training facilities within the Combat Master Hall were truly impressive. If it had been anywhere else, it would have taken at least several months before he reinforced his

Half-Leaving Aperture realm cultivation. But here, he managed to do it within just three days!

Admittedly, it would still be quite some time before he was ready to push for a breakthrough to the Leaving Aperture realm, but with his body having adapted to his current level of cultivation, he would be able to draw forth incredible might at a wave of his hand.

"It's only because Elder Qi has a strong foundation. Not just anyone is able to utilize the formation to its full potential as you did," Hall Master Xing remarked.

Ultimately, the formation only played an auxiliary role in one's cultivation. What was more important was the cultivator himself.

Elder Qi had braved through many threatening situations, and this had elevated his state of mind to an incredible level. In fact, Hall Master Xing suspected that the other party might even be able to clear the Trial of Inner Demons easily.

Choosing not to linger too much on the topic, Elder Qi asked, "How has Sun shi been doing recently?"

He had been wanting to formally pay a visit to his benefactor to thank him, but in the past three days, he had found that the latter had been working even more diligently than him. In fact, there was hardly anyone who had caught a glimpse of him in the Combat Master Hall.

"You know, I really have to admit that Sun shi is a true genius!" Hearing that question, Hall Master Xing recalled the various reports he had heard over the past two days, and his eyes lit up in agitation.

"Genius?"

"Un. The first place Sun shi visited was the Fist Division. I presume that you should have heard of the Strength Assessing Fist Pillar there, right?" Hall Master Xing asked.

Elder Qi nodded.

The existence of the Strength Assessing Fist Pillar was no secret in the Qingyuan Empire. In fact, there were quite a few people who would visit the Fist Division in hopes of borrowing it to assess their current strength.

It was a Saint-tier artifact, and it could accurately gauge one's punching strength.

"The record for the Strength Assessing Fist Pillar for Saint 2-dan was left behind by Combat Master Wang Ce eight thousand years ago. Combat Master Wang Ce was born with incredible strength, and he went on to cultivate the Art of Drawing Oceans and the strongest defensive secret art of our Combat Master Hall, thus strengthening his zhenqi and physical body to an unbelievable level.

"Not only that, he is also an avid fist practitioner. Over the years, he refined his fist art to an unprecedented level. Yet, he only achieved a score of 18 in the trial. On the other hand, with just two hours of cultivation, Sun shi broke the record and attained a score of 88!"

Even as he spoke of those words, Hall Master Xing's eyes could not help but widen in disbelief as he imaged the situation in his head.

It was not without reason that achieving a record was considered a great honor. It could only be achieved by pushing one's body to the very limits, achieving a level that could be considered very close to the limit of a human. As such, breaking a record was never an easy feat. Those who did succeed in breaking a record would also only achieve a score slightly higher than the previous record.

Yet, that fellow actually managed to clear the record with a score several times the previous score.

This was truly unbelievable!

"You said that he attained a score of 88?" Elder Qi's lips twitched.

"Indeed. I was astonished by the score, too, so I went to look for him to ask him about the matter. But he said..." At this point, Hall Master Xing suddenly shook his head, and a look of utter defeat surfaced on his face.

"What did he say?"

"He said that... he attained a score of 88 because he felt that it was an auspicious number 1 . His pockets have been running dry recently, and he hoped that this auspicious omen could change his luck a little," Hall Master Xing replied hoarsely.

"..." Elder Qi.

"And after he was done with the Fist Division, he went on ahead to the Palm Division."

Hall Master Xing suddenly fell silent at this point. It took a long while before he was able to carry on.

"As you might know, the Combat Master Hall's palm techniques can be divided into eighteen types, such as soft and gentle or hard and forceful. In order to assess one's comprehension of a certain palm type, the Palm Division has a trial guarded by eighteen puppets. Usually, clearing even the first puppet is a difficult feat for most combat masters, and yet... after he entered, he immediately triggered all of the puppets into action, and with a palm each, he defeated all eighteen of the puppets. All in all, it didn't even take him ten breaths!"

"He defeated all of the puppets with a palm each?" Elder Qi widened his eyes in shock.

"Indeed! More importantly, the palm type he used corresponded perfectly to each of the puppets. In other words, his palm art changed eighteen times within just a short ten breaths!" Hall Master Xing continued.

"How is that possible?" Elder Qi could not help but shudder upon hearing those words.

As the wrist was one of the most flexible parts of a human body, palm arts tended to be one of the more complicated and profound battle techniques. Using a gentle palm art and a forceful palm art drew on vastly different strengths, and an abrupt switch between the two could easily lead to severe injuries. Yet, to change to eighteen different types within just ten breaths... Was this really a feat that could be pulled off by a human?

Was the other party's body forged of metal, making him impervious to the backlash from the abrupt switches?

If it had been Elder Qi himself doing it, he had no doubt that his meridians would have ruptured.

"The true shocker has yet to come. You should know of our Guardian Division, right?" Hall Master Xing asked.

"Of course I do," Elder Qi replied with a nod. "The Guardian Division is known for its Divine Hammer, which is capable of analyzing the flaws of a cultivator's body and tempering them through hammering, thus enhancing one's defenses. Once all 1,296 acupoints have been tempered, even blades will struggle to slice through one's skin. Through it, the Guardian Division has developed generations of formidable combat masters!"

If the Weapon Division was the strongest spear in the Combat Master Hall, the Guardian Division was definitely the sturdiest shield of it.

Those who could master its heritage would be nigh indestructible on the battlefield. Putting aside arrows, even Saint-tier weapons would hardly leave a mark on them. Just like the resilient cockroaches, they were a fearsome force regardless of where they went.

"Indeed. The Divine Hammer is a Saint intermediate-tier artifact, and it has exceptional capabilities in tempering the human body. However, its strikes produce excruciating pain that permeate deep into the bones, causing normal combat masters to be unable to

even withstand a minute of its tempering. Even I am unable to last more than five minutes. But when Sun shi entered the Guardian Hall to allow his body to be tempered by the Divine Hammer..."

Hall Master Xing clutched his forehead and exclaimed incredulously, "... he actually fell asleep!"

"He fell asleep?" Elder Qi nearly spurted blood.

"He said that it was simply too comfortable, so he ended up dozing off. Honestly, if not for the fact that we were worried for his health and dragged him out, he might have just slept for several days straight in there!" Hall Master Xing said helplessly.

When he saw saliva flowing from the corners of Sun shi's face, he had nearly fainted from horror.

Such excruciating hammering, and the other party could actually think of it as a mere massage and relax from it... It was truly inconceivable.

"After he woke up, he headed to the Footwork Division. In the Trial of Footwork, there are total of 122 hidden mechanisms. As soon as one steps into the trial, one will trigger the mechanisms, resulting in a relentless wave of attacks. The further one proceeds into the trial, the more complicated the attacks become, and the harder it is to dodge them," Hall Master Xing explained.

Elder Qi nodded in response.

The trials of the Combat Master Hall's Ten Divisions were deeply feared in the Qingyuan Empire, and this was especially so for the Trial of Footwork.

It assessed one's reflexes, speed, judgement, and many other aspects. If one was lacking in any of those, one would be struck before one knew it.

"Before entering the Trial of Footwork, I earnestly warned Sun shi about the difficulty of the trial for fear that he would be injured by it. Yet, who could have known that... he walked in and out of

the entire trial, but he didn't even trigger a single one of the hidden mechanisms! Thus, I forcefully activated all of the hidden mechanisms as soon as he entered the second time around, filling the entire trial with weapons and threats. Yet again, he walked in and out, but he still didn't encounter a single thing."

Hall Master Xing looked at the sky with a look of despair and sighed. "It was then that I realized that he was simply too fast. Such that even before the hidden mechanisms could do a single thing, he had already passed by all of them."

"Even the hidden mechanisms didn't have time to react?" Elder Qi's body trembled in disbelief.

The hidden mechanisms were controlled by a formation within the trial, and they would be triggered as soon as one entered the vicinity of the trap. Yet, to move so fast that even the mechanisms did not have time to process his existence... Just how fast did he move?

At such speed, the other party was capable of killing him before he could even perceive the other party's existence!

"Indeed!"

The more Hall Master Xing spoke, the deeper the bitterness on his face became.

To be able to become the head of a regional Combat Master Hall, it went without saying that he was an incredible genius in his time too. With his talent, he thought that he could easily reach levels beyond his peers as long as he were to put in hard work.

But upon seeing Sun shi, he suddenly realized that his talent was really nothing at all...

Before the other party, he was like dirt before the brilliant sun.

Just by strolling around in each division for less than four hours each, he was able to accomplish achievements that were unmatched by any predecessors and probably by many future

generations to come as well.

'Genius' was no longer sufficient to describe him. In fact, even 'monstrous' seemed to be a little inadequate.

On the other hand, after hearing Hall Master Xing's story, Elder Qi's mouth was wide open.

He had thought that even if Sun shi was able to make some advancement in his fighting prowess over the past three days, it would surely have been minimal. No one could have imagined that he would be able to cook up such a huge commotion!

It took a long time before Elder Qi was able to calm down his agitated mind, and taking a deep breath, he said, "It seems like you have really chosen the right person this time around. Sun shi shouldn't have any problem dealing with the huge trouble you spoke of."

After the past few days of interaction with Hall Master Xing, he had learned what the 'huge trouble' was. For a student faction of a Tier-1 Empire's Master Teacher Academy to be able to force their Combat Master Hall to such a desperate state, it had to be said that the rumored Principal Zhang did live up to his reputation.

Even though he had never met Principal Zhang in person, just by looking at the strength of the Xuanxuan Faction, he knew that it would be unwise to underestimate the other party's strength.

"Indeed. I was still worried if Sun shi would be able to match Principal Zhang, but honestly, after seeing what Sun shi has accomplished so far, I am really unable to fathom an opponent who would be able to match him." After venting out the shock he had accumulated over the past few days, Hall Master Xing finally felt as if a huge burden had been lifted from his heart, and a smile returned to his lips.

Having seen the Xuanxuan Faction's strength with his own eyes, it was inevitable that he was apprehensive about going against an

opponent like Principal Zhang. However, after witnessing the peerless strength that Sun shi had displayed, all worries had vanished from his mind.

If a 6-star master teacher like Principal Zhang could defeat even a monster of Sun shi's caliber, the Combat Master Hall might as well be replaced with the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy.

"That's good. I am also interested to see Sun shi using his strength to surpass the undefeatable legend of the Hongyuan Empire!" Elder Qi nodded with a smile.

Taking a glance at the sky outside, Hall Master Xing said as he stood up, "Looking at the time, the members of the Xuanxuan Faction should be arriving very soon. Let me invite Sun shi over."

Today was the day that the Combat Master Hall would be holding an exchange with the Xuanxuan Faction, and the latter should have been on their way over at that moment.

The Xuanxuan Faction was a huge headache, but Hall Master Xing did not think that they would lose in the exchange. After all, there was far more to a battle than just combat skills.

"Let me head there with you," Elder Qi said as he stood up as well, and they began making their way out.

Shortly after they left the room, Division Head Liao walked up to them.

Noting that Division Head Liao was alone, Hall Master Xing asked with a frown, "Where is Sun shi?"

"He said that it was still early, so... he went to the Soul Division first!" Division Head Liao replied.

"Soul Division?" Hall Master Xing froze for a brief moment before his face turned ghastly pale. "The Trial of Soul in the Soul Division is managed by the Saint 4-dan Chrysoprase Soul Beast. Our Combat Master Hall had to pay a heavy price to invite it over... This is bad!"

"Chrysoprase Soul Beast?" Elder Qi pondered for a moment. "That saint beast is indeed born with a powerful soul, allowing them to easily knock out anyone. Are you afraid that Sun shi will be knocked out ahead of the exchange?"

"That's not it. I'm afraid that he will tame the Chrysoprase Soul Beast!" Hall Master Xing exclaimed anxiously.

"..." Elder Qi.

Chapter 1133: He Started It

If the Heart Division was the most mysterious division of the Combat Master Hall, the most bizarre division was probably the Soul Division.

In the Trial of Soul, a cultivator could temper their soul. However, a moment of carelessness could potentially place one in a disoriented state, temporarily robbing them of their ability to think rationally.

Zhang Xuan pushed open the door and entered his trial. As soon as he took a step in, he immediately heard a slight moaning sound by his ear, as if an aggrieved ghost was crying beside him. That crying seemed to capture the entirety of one's attention, causing one to forget one's initial purpose.

Zhang Xuan frowned as he halted his footsteps. It's a type of demonic tune.

He had encountered a situation similar to this back at the Qiu Wu Palace as well. When used in the correct circumstances, demonic tunes could prove to be extremely dangerous, rendering one incapable of discerning fiction from reality. However, against Zhang Xuan, a cultivator of the Heaven's Path Divine Art, its effects were minimal.

Driving his zhenqi around his body, the effects of the demonic tunes immediately vanished without a trace. Through playing closer attention to the moaning sound, he was able to determine the general direction it was coming from, so he began heading in that direction.

The Trial of Soul was significantly larger than the Trial of Inner Breath and Trial of Martial Arts, spanning a radius of roughly fifty meters. However, as it was completely dark, it was impossible to determine where one was heading. Even one's Spiritual Perception was inhibited by the formation within, leaving one unable to

perceive too far ahead.

Slowly proceeding forward, Zhang Xuan advanced for around twenty meters before his body abruptly jolted slightly. An oppressive pressure had suddenly assaulted him, seemingly attempting to tear his soul apart.

A soul attack? Zhang Xuan was taken aback for a moment before coming to a realization. It seems like someone is controlling the trial.

If it had just been a simple trial, it was impossible for the formation to realize so swiftly that the demonic tune was not working and resort to a soul attack instead.

For most cultivators, such a soul attack would cause them such excruciating pain that they would not be able to move at all. However, for Zhang Xuan, such a soul attack was truly trivial.

Putting aside the fact that he was protected by his Heaven's Path zhenqi, just the sheer size and strength of his soul made that pressure completely ineffective on him.

The more Zhang Xuan advanced forward, the greater the pressure became. At this point, even a Saint 3-dan cultivator would have already succumbed to the immense pressure.

Taking another two steps forward, Zhang Xuan finally identified the source of the pressure, and he chuckled softly.

"It'd be rude if I didn't reciprocate the favor to you. Why don't you try mine?" Zhang Xuan's voice was not too loud, but it sounded clearly throughout the trial.

The following moment, an overwhelming surge of soul energy burst forth from his glabella.

Even though he did not have any soul cultivation techniques beyond Saint realm, the soul tempering that he had undergone during the Saint Ascension Ordeal had condensed his soul considerably, such that it had assumed a lucid crystalline form.

With the enhanced strength of his soul, he was able to exert a pressure many times greater than before.

Hong long!

In an instant, it was as if the air had turned as viscous as mercury. An incredible pressure burst forth, directed toward the source of the soul.

Bam! Kacha!

The loud thud reminiscent of something falling heavily to the ground, accompanied with the sound of many things shattering simultaneously, echoed resoundingly in the air. At the same time, the ground also tremored intensely.

It was true that the other party's soul was powerful, but it was still severely lacking compared to his.

"A soul attack? Who are you?"

The next moment, a furious voice boomed in the room. Following which, Zhang Xuan saw a massive saint beast walking out of the shadows.

That saint beast was probably the one who had attacked him earlier. Under the immense pressure exerted by Zhang Xuan's soul, it had probably lost its balance for a moment and fallen to the ground, shattering many things beneath it.

"You are... a Chrysoprase Soul Beast?" Upon taking a look, Zhang Xuan matched the distinctive traits of the saint beast before him with the books he had browsed through, and he could not help but frown.

The Chrysoprase Soul Beast was a rather peculiar saint beast. Unlike most saint beasts, which relied heavily on their superior physical bodies in combat, the Chrysoprase Soul Beast specialized in soul offense instead. Blessed with an innately powerful soul, it could easily produce hallucinations and leave its opponents in a disoriented state.

It was an extremely rare beast, and not even the Beast Tamer Guild had seen many of them in its entire history. It was rather unexpected to see this rare beast in the Combat Master Hall.

This knowledge swiftly flashed through Zhang Xuan's mind before he answered the other party's question. "I am a master teacher who is here to challenge this trial!"

"You are a master teacher?" the Chrysoprase Soul Beast snorted. Deep hostility flickered across its massive eyes as it sneered, "How could a master teacher possibly be skilled in the means of the soul oracles? Speak, who are you?"

Zhang Xuan was stunned for a brief moment after hearing those words, but he swiftly recovered and replied with a smile. "Soul oracle? You must have misunderstood me somehow."

The heritage of the soul oracles had vanished from the Master Teacher Continent several dozen millenniums ago. As such, not even master teachers would be able to identify it with certainty even if he utilized the means of a soul oracle before them. He had not really thought that the Chrysoprase Soul Beast would be able to recognize it with a single look.

It was not a crime to inherit the heritage of the soul oracles, but ultimately, just like poison arts, soul arts were viewed as unorthodox and depraved, and they were deeply feared throughout the Master Teacher Continent. In order to avoid trouble, it was best for Zhang Xuan not to admit to it.

Hearing Zhang Xuan denying the matter, the Chrysoprase Soul Beast scoffed coldly. "Don't bother lying to me. I have seen soul oracles in action before, and I know their means very well."

The next instant, Zhang Xuan suddenly felt overwhelming soul energy crushing heavily down on him, seemingly trying to smash him into smithereens.

"I was just born with a powerful soul; I am not a soul oracle,"

Zhang Xuan replied with a frown.

The pressure that the other party weighed down on Zhang Xuan like an immense mountain, threatening to crush him into bits. Any cultivator who had yet to reach Primordial Spirit realm would surely have caved in to such pressure instantly. However, to Zhang Xuan, it was truly nothing at all.

Seeing that his soul attack was completely ineffective against the young man before it, the eyes of the Chrysopraxe Soul Beast narrowed slightly, and it harrumphed coldly. "Soul oracles are capable of drawing of their souls out and surviving independently. The truth will be clear once I shatter your physical body!"

With a furious roar, it abruptly leaped forward, and a massive claw flew toward Zhang Xuan.

Si la!

The furious momentum of the claws produced a sharp, shrill sound, leaving one's hairs standing on end. It felt as if it would mercilessly rip anything before it in two.

"Hmm?"

Not expecting the other party to suddenly launch a lethal assault against him, Zhang Xuan's eyebrows knitted together in displeasure. His feet swiftly took a few steps backward with amazing agility, thus dodging the other party's assault perfectly.

Over the past three days, Zhang Xuan had made his way through the Ten Divisions of the Combat Master Hall and collected whatever books they had in them. With his newly collected books, he was able to compile several higher tier Heaven's Path battle techniques.

Regardless of whether it was the might of his fists, the strength of his palm, or the sturdiness of his defenses, they had been elevated to a whole new level.

If he was only a match against Primordial Spirit realm cultivators

three days ago, the current him could be said to be invincible among Primordial Spirit realm cultivators.

Or to put it in simpler terms, any cultivator who had not reached Half-Leaving Aperture realm would not be a match for him.

And among all his battle techniques, the improvement in his movement technique was the greatest. After collecting all of the books in the Footwork Division, he had finally managed to perfect the 1-dan of the Unbound Voyager into a Heaven's Path battle technique, and he had immediately cultivated it on the spot.

It was through the Unbounded Voyager that he was able to move so fast that not even the hidden mechanisms had been able to perceive his presence.

"Where do you think you are going?"

Seeing that the young man had escaped from its claws, the Chrysoprase Soul Beast bellowed furiously as it raised its claws once more. A formation whirred into action, and in the blink of an eye, the Trial of Soul was completely sealed. There was no way to escape anymore.

Huala!

After sealing the surroundings, the Chrysoprase Soul Beast immediately launch another series of attacks against the young man before it.

On the other hand, after dodging several lethal attacks from the saint beast before him, Zhang Xuan's patience finally wore thin, and he shook his head. "If a fight is what you want, a fight is what you'll get."

As his figure blurred, Zhang Xuan appeared by the side of the Chrysoprase Soul Beast in the blink of an eye before shooting a powerful fist toward the latter.

Peng!

Under the staggering might of Zhang Xuan's fist, the Chrysoprase Soul Beast's figure retreated swiftly before crashing heavily into the roof above. Its figure then plummeted heavily back to the ground, and a huge pool of fresh blood flowed out of its mouth.

So weak?

Zhang Xuan was startled by how easily he had managed to subdue the other party for a moment before he recalled the unique trait of the saint beast.

Chrysoprase Soul Beasts were blessed with powerful souls at birth, but their physical strength and resilience could only be considered average, possibly only at the level of an ordinary cultivator. There was no way it could withstand the might of his Heaven's Path Fist Art.

As such, with just a single strike, it was already severely wounded.

Zhang Xuan shook his head. I accidentally used too much strength.

Even though the other party had tried to kill him, he was ultimately still the guardian of the Trial of Soul. It would be hard for him to explain this to the Combat Master Hall if it died after facing him. Furthermore, it was due to the other party's doubts that he was a soul oracle that it had made a move on him, and considering the association of the soul oracles with the Otherworldly Demons, its actions were not completely unjustified.

Shaking his head, Zhang Xuan slowly walked toward the Chrysoprase Soul Beast. I guess I'll have to try saving it then.

...

While making their way toward the Soul Division, Division Head Liao said with a casual wave of his hand, "Hall Master Xing, the situation can't be as exaggerated as you make it out to be. The Chrysoprase Soul Beast has a gentle personality; it's unlikely that it

will get into a conflict with Sun shi."

The Chrysoprase Soul beast was the saint beast responsible for managing the Trial of Soul. While it would use demonic tunes and soul pressure to temper the challengers, it was actually a mild-mannered and meticulous individual. In the time that it had managed the Trial of Soul, there had never been a single mishap.

Furthermore, it was not like Sun shi had intentionally entered the Trial of Soul to wreak havoc. No matter how he looked at it, the chances of a conflict breaking out between the both of them was truly unlikely.

"I honestly hope for that to be the case, too. You also know how far I had to go in order to convince the Chrysoprase Soul Beast to become the guardian of the Trial of Soul. I can't allow anything to go wrong at this point," Hall Master Xing said with a bitter smile.

He also wished that nothing bad would happen, but Sun shi was simply too exceptional an individual. Every single time he challenged a trial, he would either break several records or cause a huge ruckus. Given so, he could not help but worry that the latter would somehow end up fighting against the Chrysoprase Soul Beast.

The Combat Master Hall could not have either of them getting injured at this point in time!

The three of them swiftly arrived at the Soul Division and entered the Trial of Soul.

Pushing open the door, they stepped into the trial, and the very first thing they saw was a giant Chrysoprase Soul Beast lying on the ground with its tongue sticking out from its mouth. Blood was trickling down from the edge of its mouth, forming a crimson puddle on the ground.

"Sun shi, w-what happened here?"

Not expecting his worst fears to actually come true, Hall Master

Xing's cheeks twitched uncontrollably. At this point, he really felt like crying.

"Hmm?" Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan turned around and saw the trio. A sheepish look crept onto his face as he asked, "Why are you all here?"

"We were afraid that you might get into a conflict with the Chrysoprase Soul Beast." Hall Master Xing swiftly tried to mediate the situation. "I know that it might have attacked you, but that is its responsibility as the guardian of the Trial of Soul. It isn't trying to pick on you or anything."

He had rushed there in hopes of preventing any conflict between the duo, but he had ended up being a step too late.

Furthermore, from the looks of it, it seemed like the Chrysoprase Soul Beast had been done in real bad. It did not seem like it would recover anytime soon.

"If only that were the case..." Seeing Hall Master Xing speaking up on behalf of the Chrysoprase Soul Beast, Zhang Xuan shook his head. He was just about to begin explaining what had happened previously when the eyes of the Chrysoprase Soul Beast suddenly opened wide.

It exclaimed anxiously, "Hall Master Xing, don't listen to his words! He's a sou—"

But before it could finish its words, a certain young man had already sunk his feet into its face.

Peng!

Its words were stifled back into its throat as its massive body flew several dozen meters away before crashing back onto the ground. The floor of the Combat Master Hall was constructed of an extremely resilient material, but the impact of the Chrysoprase Soul Beast's fall still created huge web of cracks on the ground.

Its teeth plopped all around the ground as its head twisted to the

side. It had fainted.

"Sun shi!"

Not expecting the young man to kick the Chrysoprased Soul Beast flying right before their eyes, Hall Master Xing and the others were stupefied. Panicked, they quickly turned to the young man, only to see the latter looking back at them with a helpless shrug.

"If I were to say that it made the first move... would you believe me?"

"..." Hall Master Xing.

"..." Division Head Liao.

"..." Elder Qi.

Chapter 1134: Who Is the Opponent Whom I Need to Defeat?

Hall Master Xing and the others felt as if they were on the brink of insanity.

We saw you kicking the Chrysoprase Soul Beast in its face with our own eyes; you nearly killed it with that blow. And yet, you are telling us that it made the first move?

Has anyone ever spouted such bullsh*t before?

Just how on earth did it offend you that you have to go so far against it?

Was there a need for a genius like you to get so serious against a beast?

Sighing deeply, Hall Master Xing explained, "Sun shi, if the Chrysoprase Soul Beast has offended you in any way, I beseech you to forgive it. The Combat Master Hall had to pay a hefty price before we managed to convince it to become the guardian of the Trial of Soul. If something happens to it, the operations of the Soul Division will be affected."

"Hu..." As Zhang Xuan had expected, the other party really did not believe his words. Knowing that it would not make a difference no matter how much he argued, he shook his head and said, "I understand. I'll help you treat it then."

Seeing that Sun shi did not hold any hostility toward the Chrysoprase Soul Beast, Hall Master Xing heaved a sigh of relief. "It's fine. Our Combat Master Hall has top-notch medicine to deal with injuries. I'll just get my men to bring some over."

"There's no need to waste good medicine for this. Allow me to treat it instead," Zhang Xuan said. "Don't worry, I am a physician too. I won't stoop so low as to harm my patient!"

"Ah, I nearly forgot that Sun shi is a formidable physician too!" Hall Master Xing came to a realization, and he burst into a hearty laughter.

The man before him was a formidable physician who could treat a poison that even Elder Qi was helpless before. With him treating the Chrysoprased Soul Beast, it should not be long before the latter was nursed to full health.

"Indeed, Sun shi's medicinal skills are nothing short of amazing. Considering that the Chrysoprased Soul Beast has only sustained physical wounds, it shouldn't be a problem for him." Elder Qi nodded. "It would be a pleasure to see Sun shi's medicinal skill in action..."

But as he said those words, his smile abruptly froze as his words came to a halt. Right before his eyes, he saw the young man walking up to the Chrysoprased Soul Beast and kicking it forcefully once more!

Peng!

The Chrysoprased Soul Beast flew right into the sky once more.

"..." Elder Qi, Hall Master Xing, and Division Head Liao.

Didn't you say that you are a physician and you wouldn't stoop so low as to harm a patient?

Didn't you say that you are going to treat it?

Is there a physician in a world who treats their patient like that?

The trio nearly burst into tears.

Unable to stand it any longer, Hall Master Xing dashed forward and grabbed the hand of the young man before him and asked with a deep frown, "Sun shi, just what on earth do you want?"

If not for the fact that the other party was a benefactor to him and the Combat Master Hall, he would have definitely sent the other party flying with a slap at this very moment.

Peng!

With his hand grabbed by Hall Master Xing, Zhang Xuan had no choice but to stop what he was doing. He turned around and faced Hall Master Xing with a peeved look on his face and said, "Hall Master Xing, I am in the midst of my treatment. Move aside!"

"Ah?" Hall Master Xing was slightly taken aback by Zhang Xuan's forceful words.

Before he could respond to those words, the Chrysoprase Soul Beast suddenly rose to its feet and walked up to Zhang Xuan before lowering its body subserviently. "Sun shi, Bro Sun, Grandpa Sun, won't you kick me a few more times? As long as you give me a few more good kicks, I'll even acknowledge you as my master!"

"..." Hall Master, Division Head Liao, and Elder Qi.

Hall Master Xing was afraid that the Chrysoprase Soul Beast would leave the Combat Master Hall out of rage from a conflict with Sun shi, and that was why he had rushed over as soon as possible to mediate between the both of them. Yet, who would have thought that the Chrysoprase Soul Beast would actually have an extraordinary interest in pain?

As long as he kicks you, you will even go as far to acknowledge him as your master?

The heck! When I recruited you over back then, you were so arrogant, as if you were the master of the world! Why are you so subservient now?

Are those who specialize in soul arts as perverted as you are?

Wait a moment, isn't this an opportunity as well? If I can get it to acknowledge me as its master, I won't need to worry about it leaving the Combat Master Hall anymore, right?

After pondering for a moment, Hall Master Xing walked up to the Chrysoprase Soul Beast and cleared his throat. "Ahem! Chrysoprase Soul Beast, why don't you acknowledge me as your

master instead? I'll kick you whenever you desire it!"

"..." Chrysoprase Soul Beast.

"..." Zhang Xuan.

Ignoring the sudden eccentric words from Hall Master Xing, Zhang Xuan turned to the Chrysoprase Soul Beast and said, "By now, you should know that I am not a soul oracle, right?"

The Chrysoprase Soul Beast's lips twitched slightly as it quickly replied. "Erk... Of course you're not!"

If he were to say that the other party was a soul oracle once more, it might just be killed on the spot.

Hearing those words, Hall Master Xing turned to the duo and asked, "Soul oracle? What are the both of you talking about?"

"Due to my abnormally powerful soul, it thought that I was a soul oracle and made a move against me," Zhang Xuan explained.

"You suspected Sun shi of being a soul oracle?" Hall Master Xing turned to the Chrysoprase Soul Beast and shook his head. "You must be misunderstanding something here. Sun shi over here is a particularly formidable spirit awakener, and that's why his soul may appear to be abnormally powerful. In fact, he was the one who helped treat the huge rift in my Primordial Spirit!"

"He's a spirit awakener?" The Chrysoprase Soul Beast was stunned for a moment before awkwardness spread across its face.

Despite their differing field of specialties, spirit awakeners had a deep understanding of souls just like soul oracles. Otherwise, there was no way they would have been able to enchant weapons, nourish souls, and reinforce Primordial Spirits.

To think that he would actually suspect a spirit awakener of being a soul oracle and even make a move on the other party...

Seeing that the other party no longer doubted him, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. At this point, he could not help but recall a

particularly intriguing piece of information he had heard from the other party, so he asked, "I remember that you said earlier that you have met a soul oracle, but didn't the soul oracles go extinct many years ago?"

For it to have witnessed the means of a soul oracle in person, could it be that there were other soul oracles who had survived the wrath of the master teachers?

"That's right. Many years ago, back when I was still traveling around the world, I encountered a soul oracle. He possessed exceptionally powerful means that allowed him to devour the souls of others to nourish his own. With my own eyes, I saw the soul of a good friend of mine being consumed, and I was nearly devoured myself. It was only due to my powerful soul that I was able to withstand his soul art and escape. This is also why I got particularly agitated when I saw you utilizing means reminiscent of a soul art and acted recklessly. Please do pardon me for that," the Chrysoprase Soul Beast said.

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan frowned.

There was indeed a soul art that allowed one to devour the souls of others to nourish their own. However, that was an extremely depraved technique, so Zhang Xuan had opted not to learn it.

"Where did you encounter the soul oracle?" Zhang Xuan asked.

The Chrysoprase Soul Beast pondered for a brief moment before replying. "I encountered the soul oracle in the Marshlands of the Northern Meadows."

"The Marshlands of the Northern Meadows?" Zhang Xuan was startled.

Could it be related to Vicious?

Back then, when Cang Xu attempted to kill him back in the Trial of Inner Demons, he had used Soul Search on the other party and learned that Vicious had a body part hidden in the Marshlands of

the Northern Meadows. For the Chrysoprase Soul Beast to say that he had encountered a soul oracle there... it seemed too much of a coincidence for the both matters to not be related to one another.

"There are soul oracles in the Marshlands of the Northern meadows? Why have you never spoken of it before?" Hall Master Xing's face darkened.

The duty of the combat masters was not only in fending off the Otherworldly Demons but to protect mankind as well.

If a soul oracle capable of consuming souls appeared, it was their responsibility to defeat them.

"I intended to do so, but it's a pity that the Combat Master Hall has no one who stands a chance against him at all. If I had spoken of it, it would just have resulted in unneeded deaths of combat masters!" the Chrysoprase Soul Beast replied.

"This..." Hall Master Xing's face reddened.

Clearly, the Chrysoprase Soul Beast lacked confidence in the Combat Master Hall's strength.

"Hall Master Xing, there's no need for you to feel embarrassed by this. The means of the soul oracles are extremely difficult to deal with. Putting aside unprepared combat masters, it would be difficult for you to deal with the soul oracle even if you headed there personally." As the Chrysoprase Soul Beast spoke, hostility surfaced in its eyes. "In fact, I only chose to accept your invitation to the Soul Division back then in hopes of tempering your Combat Masters' souls and my own so as to exact vengeance for my good friend one day!"

Seeing its state, Hall Master Xing nodded in realization.

It was no wonder the Chrysoprase Soul Beast had never spoken about any further remuneration over these years. It seemed like its main purpose at the Soul Division was to avenge the friend whom it had lost to the soul oracle back then.

Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment before asking, "Can you explain the situation to me? If the other party is truly a soul oracle, I might be of some help!"

His soul cultivation had already hit a bottleneck due to lack of further soul cultivation techniques. Thus, it was about time for him to search for new ones, and this could very well be an opportunity for him. Besides, considering that this matter was likely related to Vicious, there was a need for him to head over there personally.

Hearing those words, the eyes of the Chrysoprase Soul Beast lit up. "Given that the strength of Sun Shi's soul exceeds even mine, it would be great if you could help us defeat that soul oracle!"

Over the years, it had assessed many combat masters, but not a single one had been able to satisfy its demand. On the other hand, even though the person before it was still young, his soul was exceptionally powerful, such that even it was not a match for his soul. If the other party could help it in dealing with the soul oracle, they might be able to subdue him!

"My friend was a Verdant Cloak Beast, and his cultivation had reached Primordial Spirit realm, just like me. We heard that the Marshlands of the Northern Meadows had Afloat Soul Flowers, which are rumored to be able to enhance one's soul significantly upon consumption. Thus, we headed there together.

"However, before we could find the Afloat Soul Flowers, we met that soul oracle and ended up fighting him. He was unable to match the both of us, so he turned around and fled. However, in the middle of the night, he assaulted us in his soul form, and with a bellow, he extracted my friend's soul from his body and captured it. I tried every single method at my disposal, but I was unable to retrieve my friend's soul from his grasp. Eventually, I could only watch with my eyes as he devoured my friend's soul whole.

"After that, he tried to capture my soul as well. However,

fortunately, due to my powerful innate soul, I was able to withstand his soul art and flee. Otherwise, I would have lost my life there as well!"

Recalling the situation back then, the Chrysoprase Soul Beast could not help but feel a little frightened.

As a master of soul arts itself, it knew how frightening soul oracles were. Soul arts might have appeared to be relatively weaker in a direct battle, but due to their elusive nature, it was nearly impossible to guard against them. If a soul oracle put their mind to it, they could easily draw out the soul of another in the middle of their dreams.

"With just a bellow, he was able to draw out your friend's soul?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

There was no record of such a formidable soul art from the heritage he had obtained from Mo Hunsheng.

The Chrysoprase Soul Beast nodded. "Indeed. Just by calling out the name of my friend, the soul oracle was able to extract his soul. No matter how my friend retaliated or how I tried to save him, it didn't work at all."

Recalling the various means he possessed as well, Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement. "It's indeed difficult to guard against the means of a soul oracle..."

Just as he was about to continue speaking, Division Head Wei suddenly rushed into the room.

"Hall Master Xing, they are here!"

"They are here?" Hall Master Xing nodded. "Sun shi, let's discuss this matter later. The big trouble that I told you about previously is here."

"Great. I have been wanting to meet the man who dared provoke the Combat Master Hall. Don't worry, I will have his teeth knocked out for you!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

Following behind Hall Master Xing, they swiftly left the Soul Division, and before long, they arrived before a vast square.

Before they could enter the square, an excited exclaim suddenly sounded.

"Teacher, we have been looking all around for you!"

Turning around, Zhang Xuan saw Wang Ying and Zheng Yang rushing up to him.

Behind them, the many members of the Xuanxuan Faction were lined up neatly. Upon seeing Zhang Xuan, they immediately clasped their fists and greeted him. "Principal Zhang!"

"Un, you came at a good time. It happens that I'm about to clash with an expert, so it'd be good for you to watch carefully!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

He had been thinking of asking Hall Master Xing to allow the members of the Xuanxuan Faction to spectate the battle as well. After all, it would be a good learning opportunity for them. However, considering how gravely Hall Master Xing regarded the matter, it did not seem right for him to turn it into a spectacle for others.

But since the entire Xuanxuan Faction was already there, he was spared from the dilemma.

"You are going to clash with an expert? Who is it?" Wang Ying asked curiously.

"It's with... Wait a moment, let me ask first."

It was only at this moment that Zhang Xuan realized that he still did not know whom his opponent was. Thus, turning to face Hall Master Xing, he asked with a polite smile, "Hall Master Xing, may I know whom the big trouble is? Who is the opponent whom I need to defeat?"

Chapter 1135: What? I Am the Big Trouble?

Till now, Hall Master Xing had always referred to that person as 'big trouble', and he had not said who the person was.

As such, Zhang Xuan had no idea who the other party was. All he knew was that the other party was an extremely skilled individual who possessed fighting prowess at the peak of his cultivation realm.

As one who had cultivated the Heaven's Path Divine Art, he was confident that he would be able to subdue any opponent in the same cultivation realm easily, but he did not believe that he was truly invincible. After all, his clone was always around to remind him not to get complacent. Since his clone was able to attain strength far greater than him, surely there would be some amazingly talented cultivators in the world who might have been able to do the same.

As such, from the start to the end, he had never doubted that the 'big trouble' Hall Master Xing referred to could have been referring to him.

After all, he had never met with anyone from the Combat Master Hall in his identity as the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy ever since he arrived in Qingyuan Empire, so how could he possibly be the 'big trouble' the other party was talking about?

Furthermore, from the tone Hall Master Xing assumed, it was apparent that the Combat Master Hall was facing a great adversary, which further served to convince Zhang Xuan's subconscious mind that it could not possibly be him.

After all, he was a humble individual who could not get any more low profile. Ever since he arrived in the Qingyuan Empire, all he did was pay a visit to the Spirit Awakener Guild, so it did not make sense for a Leaving Aperture realm expert like Hall Master Xing to

be so worried about him.

...

After asking, Zhang Xuan waited patiently to hear from Hall Master Xing whom that formidable expert was, only to see the Leaving Aperture realm cultivator's mouth twitching non-stop. His body staggered weakly from side to side, and it seemed as if he would collapse to the ground at any moment.

At this point, the thought of killing himself even flashed across Hall Master Xing's mind.

After everything he had done to guard against the Xuanxuan Faction, it turned out that the other party's commander had already infiltrated their camp, converting nearly all of the combat masters into his students.

To think that he was so naive as to believe that he had managed to find himself an expert to defeat Principal Zhang and resolve the crisis the Combat Master Hall was currently facing...

They had even gone to the extent of allowing Sun shi to learn their heritages, only to find out that he was actually Zhang Xuan at this point in time.

Not only did he fail to resolve the crisis, he even turned it into a catastrophe.

A mouthful of blood welled up at the back of Hall Master Xing's throat, ready to spew forth at any moment. Hall Master Xing turned around to look at Elder Qi, only to see that the latter had a flabbergasted look on his face as well.

Back then, he had wanted to see Principal Zhang's painting, which Zhuo Qingfeng had sent in, and compare it with Sun shi to verify if they were the same person. However, Elder Qi had happened to arrive at that moment and confirmed that Sun shi was his benefactor. He had guaranteed that Sun shi could not possibly be Principal Zhang.

From the looks of it now, it seemed that Elder Qi had no idea what was going on either.

If you don't know, don't make blind guarantees! Look at the trouble you have landed us in!

If only he knew this would happen, he would not have taken Elder Qi's word for it.

It just so happened that Feng Xun, Jiang Yuan, and the others were cultivating in isolation at the moment, saying that they wanted to condition themselves so as to face the Xuanxuan Faction at full strength.

Everything had happened so coincidentally that it seemed as if the heavens had planned the doom of their Combat Master Hall themselves!

Clutching his chest, Hall Master Xing felt his breathing becoming more and more unstable.

He felt like he was a true fool. All of those schemes he had come up with to fend against the Xuanxuan Faction ended up as nothing more than a joke. If anything, it had only hastened the downfall of their Combat Master Hall.

Why did life have to be so difficult?

Unable to stand it any longer, Hall Master Xing asked, "You are... Principal Zhang? Then why did you call yourself Sun Qiang?"

Not expecting the other party to ask this question instead of revealing whom to beat up, Zhang Xuan was slightly taken aback. Sighing deeply, he spoke in a tone reminiscent of an expert attempting to conceal himself in the mortal world. "I don't like to cause trouble or stand out too much. After I enchanted the Spirit Awakener Guild, I didn't want to bring unneeded trouble to the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy as a result of that, so I decided to adopt another persona instead."

It was truly a trouble being too outstanding, he could not even

conceal his true identity when he wanted to.

How frustrating!

"Pu!" Upon hearing those words and seeing how the other party was acting, blood spewed out of Hall Master Xing's mouth, and his breathing became even more unstable.

You said that you don't like to cause trouble or stand out?

Low profile?

Low profile your head!

Over the three days you have spent in our Combat Master Hall, the ruckus and commotion you have caused never halted at any single point in time. You even went to the extent of turning almost all of our combat masters into your students!

If not for the fact that you were too busy cultivating and challenging the trials, perhaps our Combat Master Hall might have become yours by now.

Every single time you challenged a trial, you just had to create a record that left others deep in despair... and you call that being low profile?

There is no one in the world who could be more high profile than you!

"Hall Master Xing, what's wrong?" Seeing the Leaving Aperture realm expert before him abruptly spurting blood in the middle of a conversation, Zhang Xuan worriedly checked on him as he stepped forward, wanting to help Hall Master Xing.

"You..." Looking at the innocent look on the other party's face, Hall Master Xing felt so angered that he could have erupted. However, he eventually forcefully suppressed it.

To be honest, he could not blame Principal Zhang for this either.

In the first place, he was the one who went to the Spirit Awakener Guild to engage the other party's help. Besides, the other

party had no obligation to report his true identity either, especially to a stranger like him.

And more importantly, the other party had agreed to help him get rid of the 'huge trouble' out of goodwill.

It was a pity that the heavens seemed to be playing a trick on them, resulting in such an awkward situation.

"It's nothing; I'm just a little short on breath..." Hall Master Xing waved his hand and rejected Zhang Xuan's help. Still unwilling to accept the truth, he asked once more, "You really are Zhang Xuan?"

"That's right. I apologize for concealing this matter from you, but it was not my intention to lie to you," Zhang Xuan replied.

"Alright then..." Hall Master Xing's face turned reddened further, and his breathing grew even more erratic.

Noticing that there was something amiss with Hall Master Xing's state, Zhang Xuan frowned. "Hall Master Xing, is there something wrong? You were still perfectly fine a moment ago... or could it be that big trouble has already made a move on you?"

To make a move right before his eyes without him noticing, it seemed like the 'big trouble' was far stronger than he had anticipated!

"Cough cough!" Unable to watch on the situation any longer, Division Head Liao stepped forward and said, "Principal Zhang, the big trouble that Hall Master Xing is referring to... is actually you!"

He feared that if this situation were to continue, their hall master might just die from sheer frustration.

"What?" Zhang Xuan was startled. "I am the big trouble?"

"That's right!" Seeing how the other party was completely oblivious to the matter, Division Head Liao nodded helplessly.

"But when you first mentioned the trouble in the Spirit Awakener Guild, I had not even been to the Combat Master Hall,

and I haven't met any of you before either." Zhang Xuan was completely bewildered by the situation.

"Hu... You will have to ask them for this matter!" Division Head Liao said as he pointed to Wang Ying and the others.

Frowning, Zhang Xuan turned to his two direct disciples and asked authoritatively, "What did you two do this time around to make the Combat Master Hall so angry?"

"We..." Wang Ying's face reddened as she said, "Some of the combat masters in the Combat Master Hall didn't abide by the rules and sneaked over to our accommodation to challenge us ahead of the exchange. As such, they ended up being pummeled by our Xuanxuan Faction. After that... they insisted on joining us, so we welcomed them with open arms and taught them the battle techniques and combat skills that you have taught us."

"That's all? From the very start, the purpose of this exchange is to learn from one another, so... this shouldn't be any problem at all..." Zhang Xuan frowned.

If the members of both organizations were just challenging and learning from one another, it should have been no big deal at all. Was there a need for Hall Master Xing and the others to label him as 'big trouble' and even display such deep fear for him?

"Cough cough. Actually, the combat masters that joined the Xuanxuan Faction aren't just limited to ordinary members. It seems there are five division heads too. They were impressed by your teachings, so they joined the Xuanxuan Faction as well..." Seeing that his teacher was still a little bewildered by the situation, Liu Yang elaborated further on the matter.

"Even the division heads have joined our Xuanxuan Faction?" Zhang Xuan's lips twitched.

He finally understood what was going on.

This was no longer a problem of whether they joined the

Xuanxuan Faction or not, but that the dignity of the Combat Master Hall was at stake.

No wonder the Combat Master Hall regarded him as their top enemy! Who would have thought that within just three short days, this group of rascals would dare to do something so preposterous!

How infuriating!

"You all... Truly preposterous! It's out of goodwill that the Combat Master Hall agreed to have an exchange with us, so how can you poach their members? Is this the right way to treat our friends? Regardless of whether we are master teachers or not, we must abide by our morals and conduct ourselves appropriately! Even if the division heads willingly joined the Xuanxuan Faction, it's not right to bring them into the Xuanxuan Faction! Is this how I have taught you all this while? You are ruining the valiant reputation I have built up for myself! How am I to face our friends in the Combat Master Hall in the future..."

Zhang Xuan began to berate Wang Ying and the others from the Xuanxuan Faction furiously.

But before he could finish his words, the many combat masters behind Hall Master Xing finally arrived at the square.

Over the past few days, Zhang Xuan had been too busy cultivating and challenging trials, so they had not been able to consult him on the problems that they had. Thus, upon seeing him standing in the middle of the square, they could not hold themselves back any longer. The entire group rushed forward excitedly and knelt onto the ground.

"Paying respects to Teacher!"

"..." Wang Ying.

"..." Zheng Yang.

"..." Everyone from the Xuanxuan Faction.

Chapter 1136: Envoys From the Spirit Awakener Guild Headquarters Arrive

Wang Ying, along with the others from the Xuanxuan Faction, came to a realization.

Turning their gazes to Zhang Xuan once more, admiration couldn't help but seep into their eyes.

As expected of their teacher (principal)!

They had to utilize every single means at their disposal before they were able to convince three hundred combat masters to join the Xuanxuan Guild. On the other hand, their teacher (principal) simply marched straight into the Combat Master Hall and took every single combat master as his student...

Truly, they had been too narrow-minded and timid. How could only capture a cub without entering a tiger's den?

On the other end, Zhang Xuan's face had turned completely green at this point.

He was in the midst of lecturing his students when this drama suddenly unfolded before his eyes... The words that he had been intending to speak ended up stifling in his mouth just like that, and he found his breathing becoming more and more unstable.

In this moment, he suddenly felt like he could empathize with Hall Master Xing.

"There's no need to stand on ceremony. Let me introduce you, this is the Xuanxuan Faction which I have founded. This is a good opportunity for all of us to trade insights and learn from one another." Zhang Xuan said with a wave of his hand.

"Yes!" The combat masters nodded.

"As for you all, this is also a good opportunity for you to learn from our friends at the Combat Master Hall. It's true that you

possess an advantage in terms of combat sense and fighting prowess, but in terms of battle techniques and state of mind, none of you are close to coming on par with them. You all still have much to work on!" Zhang Xuan instructed.

He had focused his effort on lecturing the Xuanxuan Faction on combat skills, so it was inevitable that those from the Combat Master Hall would be unable to match them. However, in terms of the foundations and sheer strength, the Xuanxuan Faction would definitely be on the losing end.

Ultimately, the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy's foundation simply paled too much in comparison to the massive Combat Master Hall. In terms of resources and heritage, there was no comparing the two.

"You are members of the Xuanxuan Faction? I heard that Xiao Qin and the others have already joined your ranks... Are you still recruiting?"

"If not for my division head keeping a close eye on all of us the past few days, we would have long gone over!"

"I heard that you all possess exceptional strength for your cultivation realm, and I have long wanted to try your hand. Anyone interested in a duel with me?"

...

It didn't take long for the combat masters and the members of the Xuanxuan Faction to mingle together harmoniously.

The Combat Master Hall had tried to lock down the news concerning the defection of Xiao Qin, the five division heads, and a few hundred other combat masters, but this matter was simply too big to be concealed. They might be able to stop others from speaking about it in the open, but they couldn't prevent gossiping in the shadows. By this time, most of the combat masters had heard bits and pieces of the matter, and they couldn't help but be

curious in the Xuanxuan Faction.

And at this moment, hearing that they were personally taught by the great Sun laoshi, their excitement was palpable.

Very soon, the members from both organizations began crossing hands.

Xiao Qin was the first representative to step forth from the Xuanxuan Faction, and he managed to utterly defeat a long-time rival of his in the Combat Master Hall.

Even those whom he was hardly a match for in the past couldn't even last three blows in his hands.

Despite not receiving Zhang Xuan's direct guidance, Wang Ying and the others still unreservedly imparted their knowledge to him. Through earnestly learning from their teachings, he had gained many new insights into combat, allowing his fighting prowess to advance by leaps and bounds.

Not to mention, he was a genius in combat himself. Three days wasn't long, but it was still sufficient for him to make substantial improvement. All in all, his fighting prowess had increased by at least twofold.

"We are willing to join the Xuanxuan Faction as well. We humbly ask of you to teach us as well!"

Seeing how swiftly their companions had improved under the tutelage of the Xuanxuan Faction, the other combat masters couldn't hold themselves back any longer.

'Hai! Who could have thought that the ten thousand years of legacy of the Qingyuan Empire Combat Master Hall would be destroyed in my hands...' Seeing the sight before him, Hall Master Xing knew that there was nothing he could do anymore. A look of defeat reminiscent of a failed examinee surfaced on his face, and an ache so sharp that it rendered him unable to breathe assaulted his heart.

As the hall master, it was a failure in itself for him to be unable to bring the Combat Master Hall to greater heights under his leadership, let alone the absorption of the Combat Master Hall into an organization from a Tier-1 Empire. He had prepared himself for the worst to come, but seeing it happen before his eyes was nevertheless heart wrenching.

"Hall Master Xing, there's no need for you to blame yourself. This matter is not a bad thing to our Combat Master Hall; on the contrary, it could even be considered as a blessing!"

At this point, Feng Xun suddenly arrived on the square.

He had been in seclusion ever since he heard of the arrival of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy three days ago, intending to prepare himself to pull off a great comeback during the exchange. Yet, when he finally came out of his seclusion, this was the shocking sight that welcomed him. It was inevitable that he would feel slightly rattled within.

However, recalling the various incredible feats that Principal Zhang had pulled off previously, this matter didn't seem to be too surprising anymore. In fact, he felt a little relieved even.

He wasn't aware that Zhang Xuan had managed to become a Celestial Saint, but the various affairs that they had gone through together in the Qiu Wu Palace was still fresh on his mind. Without a doubt, there was no harm to maintaining such close ties with an organization headed by a master teacher as formidable as the other party. With this layer of relationship, their Combat Master Hall would surely develop swiftly, and it was just a matter of time before they overtook the other Conferred Empire Combat Master Halls!

"A blessing?" Hall Master Xing and Division Head Liao turned their gazes over.

"Indeed. Think about it, the young man whom Zhuo Qingfeng had brought to the headquarters to participate in the Progeny of

Combat Selection, Zheng Yang, is Principal Zhang's direct disciple!" Feng Xun nodded in agitation. "If Zheng Yang were to clear the Progeny of Combat Selection, that would effectively mean that he is the next head of our entire Combat Master Hall, a powerhouse even when taking the entire Master Teacher Continent into consideration! Not to mention, he... is also a member of the Xuanxuan Faction!"

"This..." Hall Master Xing and the others were taken aback.

They had been too focused on the fact that the Xuanxuan Faction was a Tier-1 Empire organization that they hadn't considered matters from this perspective yet.

"Taking a step back, even if he fails the Progeny of Combat Selection, an genius who is qualified to participate in the selection is bound to become an elder of the Combat Master Hall at the very least. With him around, even if our Qingyuan Empire Conferred Master Hall were to join the Xuanxuan Faction, who would dare mock us?" Feng Xun continued.

Hall Master Xing and the others fell into deep thoughts.

If one were to look at matters from that perspective, that was indeed the case.

Even though the Master Teacher Continent viewed seniority with grave important, what was more important was the heart to learn.

No matter how old or senior an individual was, as long as the other party was more skilled than him in a single aspect, it would be worthwhile to learn from the other party.

Not to mention, Kong shi had acknowledged many individuals weaker than him as his teacher and learned from them without a shred of conceit or arrogance too! Since even a man respected as the World's Teacher could lower himself, why couldn't others do the same?

A willingness to humble oneself to learn should be respected, not ridiculed. What would be truly ridiculous was for one to choose ignorance over knowledge for his own pride!

If Zheng Yang were to become the Progeny of Combat, he would inherit the greatest heritage of the Combat Master Hall, and it would only be a matter of time before he became their next hall master. Surely there was no shame in joining the organization which the head of the powerful Combat Master Hall was a member of!

And even if the other party didn't become the hall master, an elder of the powerful Combat Master Hall was still a plenty incredible figure in the Master Teacher Continent. Similarly, it would still be a honor for them to be in the Xuanxuan Faction too.

"I understand." Having thought things through, Hall Master Xing sighed deeply and nodded. With this, the knot in his heart was finally untangled. Turning to Zhang Xuan once more, he couldn't help but feel deep respect.

For a man in his twenties to have all of the combat masters choose him over the Qingyuan Empire Combat Master Hall, which had ten thousand years of legacy behind it, he was truly a fearsome figure!

"His background probably isn't simple either!" Hall Master Xing remarked.

"From what I know, Principal Zhang's teacher goes by the name of Yang Xuan, and his cultivation has reached an unfathomable level far beyond our imagination..." Feng Xun nodded in response.

"Yang Xuan?" Startled, Hall Master Xing widened his eyes slightly. "Could it be..."

"Hm? Has Hall Master Xing heard of Yang shi before?"

"I recall hearing such a figure from my teacher before... There's formidable master teacher whom others address as Yang shi in the

Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters, and his cultivation has achieved an astounding level matched by very few in the long history of the Master Teacher Continent! However, I'm not too certain as to whether this Yang shi's name is Yang Xuan or not..." Hall Master Xing said.

"Hall Master Xing's teacher? Do you mean... 8-star Combat Master Tong Qianqiu, the man who goes by the nickname of Inferno Adamantine?" Division Head Liao asked.

Even though Hall Master Xing had never spoken about his heritage, after several centuries of friendship, Division Head Liao was still able to fathom a thing or two.

Inferno Adamantine Tong Qianqiu was a formidable combat master renowned even in the Empire Alliance. With his steel fists, he instilled deep fear into his opponents. Once, in a battle, he had single-handedly slain more than several dozen thousand Otherworldly Demons, thus striking his name out in the Master Teacher Continent.

"Un." Hall Master Xing nodded.

"If even Combat Master Tong has spoken such words, that Yang shi must be truly a formidable figure. If Yang shi truly is Principal Zhang's teacher, that would explain the latter's incredible capabilities. Under the tutelage of such a formidable master teacher, he was bound to achieve great things in the future!" Feng Xun said.

He had originally intended on challenging Zhang Xuan once more to cleanse his name, but in this moment, such thoughts had already vanished from his mind.

Since it was impossible for him to catch up with the other party no matter what he did, he might as well spare himself from the humiliation.

It wasn't a bad thing to set high goals, but a human must

understand his own limits. Being too fixated on something impossible would only narrow one's scope.

...

While Hall Master Xing and the others were chatting, Zhang Xuan was busying himself with managing the exchange.

Facilitating the exchange between the two organizations was no easy task.

Under everyone's request, Zhang Xuan conducted a lecture at the very end of the exchange. By the end of the lecture, it was already late at night, and the members from both organizations departed from the square excited and satisfied.

Deciding to stay overnight at the Combat Master Hall, Zhang Xuan beckoned Wang Ying and Liu Yang over and said, "Here are the fist art, palm art, movement art, defensive technique, and soul cultivation technique which I have organized over the past few days. Take a look through them and internalize them."

Over the past three days, he hadn't just been busy cultivating. He had also compiled a couple of battle techniques and cultivation techniques which even ordinary cultivators could practice. Since Wang Ying and Liu Yang were around, he could impart it to them first.

"Yes!" Wang Ying and Liu Yang nodded as they flipped open the book. It didn't take them long to finish browsing through the book, and with a clap of their hands, the books were completely destroyed.

If these books were to be leaked out, they might draw unwanted attention onto themselves. Thus, it would suffice for them to retain a record of the technique in their minds and cultivate it silently.

"If you have any questions regarding the techniques, raise them now." Seeing that they were done, Zhang Xuan turned to them and

said.

Wang Ying and Liu Yang quickly barraged him with all of the doubts they had.

Two hours later, the duo finally gained a thorough understanding of the battle techniques and cultivation techniques.

Heaving a sigh of relief, Zhang Xuan was just about to send them back to their accommodation when Sun Qiang abruptly rushed in at this moment.

"Young Master, Guild Leader Ruan of the Spirit Awakener Guild seeks an audience!"

"Guild Leader Ruan? Why would she be looking for me?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

It couldn't be that the guild building acting disobediently again and had secretly sneaked off?

But that couldn't be! They had already signed a soul contract, so such a thing should be impossible!

"Invite her in!" Zhang Xuan waved his hand.

Nodding, Sun Qiang left the room. Soon after, he returned with Guild Leader Ruan and a middle-aged lady.

The middle-aged lady that had come with Guild Leader Ruan looked to be in her late thirties. The clothes she wore was ordinary, but there was an air of grace and nobility around her that made none dare to underestimate her. Her disposition granted her an incredible presence that left one feeling tensed and deeply pressed.

"What incredible strength... Her cultivation seems to have even exceeded that of Hall Master Xing's!" Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes in alarm.

Even without the Eye of Insight, he could still easily discern the extraordinary strength wielded by the middle-aged lady before

him. Despite having made a breakthrough to Leaving Aperture realm, Hall Master Xing was nowhere close to matching up to her.

In other words, even at the very least, she was a Leaving Aperture realm expert!

When had such a formidable figure appear in the Spirit Awakener Guild?

"Pleased to meet you once more, Sun shi... or perhaps I should say, Principal Zhang!" While Zhang Xuan was still assessing the middle-aged lady with a doubtful look, Guild Leader Ruan walked up to him and greeted.

To be honest, she still found it hard to accept that the talented spirit awakener whom she had met a few days ago would turn out to be the principal of a Tier-1 Empire Master Teacher Academy.

"Guild Leader Ruan, there's no need to stand on ceremony. May I ask for the reason for your visit at this late hour?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"To be honest with you, I have reported the matter regarding the guild building to the headquarters, and the headquarters regards the matter with grave importance. Let me introduce you, this is Elder Wei from our headquarters!" Guild Leader Ruan said.

"Headquarters? You mean the Spirit Awakener Guild headquarters?"

Chapter 1137: Zhang Xuan's True Aptitude

Noticing Zhang Xuan's confused look, Guild Leader Ruan explained, "Elder Wei happens to be in the vicinity of Qingyuan City, so she was dispatched here."

Just like most other guilds, the headquarters of the Spirit Awakener Guild were located far away from the Qingyuan Empire. Even Saint 5-dan aerial beasts would have to fly for many days before they reached Qingyuan City. It was only due to Elder Wei being in the vicinity that she was able to make it there within three days.

After explaining the situation to Zhang Xuan, Guild Leader Ruan turned to Elder Wei and said, "Elder Wei, this is the genius whom I told you about earlier, Principal Zhang. The talent he possesses in spirit enchantment is unlike any I have ever seen or heard of!"

"Un." Elder Wei nodded. Turning to Zhang Xuan, she said, "Guild Leader Ruan has already told me about you. Within just a few hours, from knowing nothing at all about spirit enchantment, you successfully enchanted the guild building just by browsing through books. Your aptitude for spirit enchantment is truly frightening!"

"You're too polite." Zhang Xuan quickly waved his hand before asking with a perplexed frown, "May I know the reason behind Elder Wei's visit?"

"Principal Zhang is indeed a candid person. I am not the type that likes to beat around the bush either, so I'll get straight to the point. Our Spirit Awakener Guild headquarters regard you extremely highly, and we wish to extend our invitation to you to train at our headquarters," Elder Wei said.

For a person of her cultivation realm, there was no need for her to dawdle with pleasantries.

"Train at your headquarters?" Zhang Xuan was slightly startled

for a moment before shaking his head. "I believe that Guild Leader Ruan must have told you that I am a master teacher as well. For me, spirit awakener is more of a side occupation, so I don't think I will be devoting too much to furthering my skills in it."

If he did not manage to become a 9-star master teacher before he reached thirty, his life would be forfeited. Spirit awakener was a wonderful occupation, but he could not afford to allow his attention to wander at this moment.

Furthermore, while it was true that he could advance his cultivation swiftly by tapping into the resources in the Spirit Awakener Guild, there was a catch to it. If he received benefits from the Spirit Awakener Guild, he would have a responsibility to it as well. Give and take, this was how the world worked. The Spirit Awakener Guild would never allow him to shirk off his responsibilities to it after investing resources in him.

It was for this reason that Zhang Xuan had chosen to slowly advance with his own strength. He didn't want to owe too big of a favor to anyone and end up slowing his advancement as a master teacher and a cultivator.

"You can resign from being a master teacher." Elder Wei looked at Zhang Xuan intently. Her face was impassive, but the sharp glint in her eyes revealed the deep confidence that she had. "With the heritage and resources available at our headquarters, as long as someone of your aptitude works diligently, I am confident that you will one day gain control of the Spirit Awakener Mountain and become the Spirit Awakener Sovereign! At such a level, even 9-star master teachers will have to treat you with the utmost respect. Isn't that much better than slowly fumbling your way up as a master teacher?"

As spirit awakening was a support-based occupation, it was inevitable that its fighting prowess was beneath that of the other guilds. However, if one could reach the very top, the potential it wielded was immense.

If the young man before her could gain control over their sacred lands and become the Spirit Awakener Sovereign, what was there to be feared of 9-star master teachers?

"I won't resign as a master teacher," Zhang Xuan replied resolutely. "That is the primary pursuit of my life. I am interested in learning spirit enchantment as well, but ultimately, it's only a supporting occupation to me."

He might have only chosen to become a master teacher out of convenience at the start, but at this point, it had become a lot more than that. Even without his Innate Fetal Poison, he would not have been willing to abandon his identity as a master teacher to become a spirit awakener.

Elder Wei frowned. "There's no need to answer me so quickly; I'll give you a few days to think your decision through. This is a rare opportunity for you to soar to the top. Such a chance won't come again."

If it had been anyone else in the young man's stead, he would have surely leaped at her offer. After all, the Spirit Awakener Guild was still one of the more influential powers in the Master Teacher Continent.

It might not be up to par with behemoths like the Master Teacher Pavilion and the Combat Master Hall, but ordinary guilds couldn't hope to compare to it.

Yet, to flatly reject the offer like that...

"I am thankful for your offer, but my mind is set. There's no need for me to contemplate any further," Zhang Xuan replied with a polite smile.

He could take spirit awakener as his supporting occupation, but there was no way he was going to abandon his main occupation for it.

However, it would be disrespectful to the Spirit Awakener Guild,

and there was no way Elder Wei was going to accept that for an answer.

After all, that would effectively mean that they were devoting their resources to groom a master teacher for the Master Teacher Pavilion!

"Even though master teachers are the number one occupation of the continent, the resources to go around are severely limited, and rivalry over them is strife. Reaching 9-star is no easy feat at all. However, as long as you come to the Spirit Awakener Guild, all kinds of valuable resources will be at your disposal.

"Furthermore, our Spirit Awakener Guild is filled with all kinds of beauties. If you wish for it, you will be able to pick any of them. In fact, if you desire so, you can even enchant any building or weapon that takes your fancy and regard them as your closest mate. Why do you have to make things difficult for yourself?" Elder Wei asked with a frown.

Zhang Xuan shook his head. "I have no interest in such shallow pursuits. Back then, the Glacier Plain Court also offered me similar terms, but I rejected them nonetheless."

It seemed like the Glacier Plain Court and the Spirit Awakener Guild really had a low opinion of men. It was if they thought that men were all lecherous individuals who were only interested in their lower body!

What a joke!

Hu Yaoyao, Zhao Feiwu, and the others were top-notch beauties, and it was not as if he was oblivious to the feelings they had for him. If he truly wanted it, he could have easily kept them by his side.

"Glacier Plain Court?" Elder Wei was taken aback.

There were many beauties in the Spirit Awakener Guild, but they were still far from matching the Glacier Plain Court.

Most female cultivators in the Glacier Plain Court practiced yin attribute cultivation techniques, which further accentuated their feminine charms.

It was for this reason that most powers in the Master Teacher Continent viewed marrying a disciple of the Glacier Plain Court as a huge honor.

Upon learning that the Glacier Plain Court had attempted to recruit the young man before her only to fail, Elder Wei hesitated for a moment before flicking her wrist. A grayish stone appeared on her palm.

"This Spirit Gauging Stone over here is able to assess one's aptitude as a spirit awakener. If your aptitude has reached the tenth level, I can help you apply for more favorable terms with the headquarters. Perhaps, it might even be possible for you to not resign as a master teacher!"

"Assess one's aptitude as a spirit awakener?" Zhang Xuan asked.

Elder Wei hesitated for a moment before switching to zhenqi telepathy. "That's right. To be honest with you, only one whose aptitude in spirit enchantment has reached the tenth level will stand a chance in successfully enchanting the Spirit Awakener Mountain. However, it's a pity that it has been five thousand years since such an individual has emerged in our guild."

This was a secret of their guild. Considering that it was her first time meeting with the other party, she should not have revealed such deep secrets. However, according to Guild Leader Ruan, the young man was likely to possess an aptitude of the tenth level. If that truly was the case, she would have to bring him back to the headquarters regardless of the cost.

Otherwise, the Spirit Awakener Guild would only continue down its declining spiral and eventually end up being absorbed into the other powers.

Even though the Spirit Awakener Guild had many allies to rely upon, they still needed to possess some strength of their own. Otherwise, if they were to grow too reliant on others, the others could use it as leverage against them and gradually control them.

"Spirit Awakener Mountain..."

"The Spirit Awakener Mountain is an artifact formed naturally by the forces of nature, and it is the greatest trump card of our guild. It's rumored that the mountain is actually a rock mined from a world above ours. Once successfully enchanted, the spirit awakener will attain strength on par with 9-star master teachers. With that, there will be nothing in the world that could stop them!" Elder Wei said with a hint of pride in her voice.

"It's so formidable?" Zhang Xuan was astonished.

To attain strength on par with 9-star master teachers just by successfully enchanting it... that was as good as soaring to the heavens in a single step!

On top of that, he would even be able to keep master teacher as his main occupation. It would be a lie if he said that he was not moved by this deal.

Not to mention, with the vast resources of the Spirit Awakener Guild, he would no longer have to worry about a lack of concentrated high-tier spirit stones and pinnacle spirit stones. Everything would be within his reach.

Furthermore, he would be able to access their cultivation technique manuals and compile Heaven's Path Divine Art all the way to Saint 9-dan. Even if he took his time and advanced only a single realm a day, he would still be able to reach the very top of the Master Teacher Continent within just a single week, becoming an existence on par with Kong shi!

"Alright!" Seeing that Zhang Xuan was hooked, Elder Wei nodded as she passed the Spirit Gauging Stone over.

"The test is very simple. Just grasp the stone lightly and silence your mind, and it'll automatically assess your aptitude."

Zhang Xuan replied with a nod as he took the stone.

Placing his hands around it tightly, he closed his eyes.

To be honest, he was also interested to find out what his aptitude in spirit enchantment was.

As long as he could reach the mark and the other party did not insist on him resigning as a master teacher... he would seriously consider heading to the Spirit Awakener Guild headquarters.

Weng!

In an instant, he entered the state of Heart of Tranquil Water. A brilliant light burst from the stone clasped in his hands.

"Alright, it's done!"

A moment later, the light dissipated, and Zhang Xuan opened his palm.

Elder Wei and Guild Leader Ruan quickly rushed forward to take a look at the stone, and at a single glance, their eyebrows shot up in astonishment. They couldn't help but rub their eyes in disbelief.

"What's wrong?" Seeing the duo reacting in such an exaggerated manner, the bewildered Zhang Xuan lowered his gaze to look at the stone as well, and his mouth fell open. "How is this possible?"

On the stone, there was a single number—3!

"3... Does this number mean that my aptitude has only reached the third level?" Zhang Xuan asked hurriedly.

A moment ago, Elder Wei had said that the highest level of aptitude was 10, and given that he possessed capabilities on par with 7-star pinnacle spirit awakeners, even if he wasn't at the tenth level, he should at least be at seventh or eighth. For 3 to appear... what the heck?

"That's right. It means that your aptitude has only reached the third level," Elder Wei said with twitching lips.

After hearing the report, she had personally dropped by the Qingyuan Empire Spirit Awakener Guild to take a look at the guild building. Based on her deductions, the other party's aptitude should, at the very minimum, be at the ninth level. Yet... third level?

Wasn't that a little too low?

"What does this represent? Does it mean that... I'm very weak?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"This..." With a conflicted expression, Elder Wei had no idea how she should speak of this matter to the other party. She paused for a brief moment before pointing to the Spirit Gauging Stone in her hand. "This stone possesses spirit of the fourth level."

"..." Zhang Xuan.

"Why don't I give it another try then?" Fearing that something might have gone wrong, Zhang Xuan tried it a few more times. However, the result still remained fixed at 3.

Seeing the number that kept appearing relentlessly on the Spirit Gauging Stone, Zhang Xuan rubbed his glabella in frustration.

He had thought that his talent in spirit enchantment would at least be decent, if not perfect, but to think that he was even worse than a stone.

How frustrating!

It seemed that the reason he was able to become a spirit awakener so easily, even successfully enchanting the entire guild building, wasn't due to his 'astounding' aptitude in spirit enchantment. Rather, it only meant to say that the Heaven's Path Spirit Enchantment Art was simply too formidable!

Elder Wei shook her head bitterly as she stood up. "I have

imposed myself on Principal Zhang today. I'll be taking my leave now."

It might still have been a mistake the first time, but with the same result appearing so many times, she could no longer deceive herself.

Not only did Principal Zhang not possess exceptional talent in spirit enchantment, his aptitude was atrociously horrendous! It was most likely due to sheer luck that he had been able to successfully enchant the guild building.

She had thought that the Spirit Awakener Guild had finally found its savior, but from the looks of it... how could it be that simple?

If a genius with an aptitude of the tenth level could appear that easily, the seat of the guild leader of the Spirit Awakener Guild wouldn't have been empty for the past five thousand years, leaving them with no choice but to be subordinated to the other powers.

"There's no need to stand on ceremony," Zhang Xuan replied awkwardly.

He had been bargaining with the other party a moment ago, but in the end, he was worse than a mere stone.

Just recalling what had happened left his face reddening in shame.

"I will have to ask of Principal Zhang to keep the matters concerning our guild a secret." Sending a telepathic message over, Elder Wei beckoned to Guild Leader Ruan and said, "Let's go."

Right when the both of them were about to leave the manor, a crisp voice sounded.

"Teacher, can I give the Spirit Gauging Stone a try, too?"

Chapter 1138: Departure

The person who had just spoken was Wang Ying.

When Elder Wei and the others entered the room earlier, she and Liu Yang had still been in the midst of cultivating. Since it didn't seem like anything confidential, they didn't excuse themselves.

However, when Elder Wei took out the stone, she had felt a tingling sensation in her heart. It was a feeling reminiscent of... intimacy? Thus, she could not stop herself from asking for a go.

Zhang Xuan turned to his student and asked, "You wish to give it a try?"

At this moment, Wang Ying's face was completely red, and her body was trembling slightly.

"Yes... Somehow, I feel a kind of attraction force between me and the stone..." Wang Ying nodded.

"Attraction force?" Noting the serious look on Wang Ying's face, Zhang Xuan turned to Elder Wei and said, "Elder Wei, I might need to trouble you for this."

"It's fine." Elder Wei nodded. With a flick of her finger, the Spirit Gauging Stone flew toward the young lady, landing accurately in the latter's hand.

Without saying anything, Wang Ying placed the stone between her palms before slowly closing her eyes.

Weng!

A blinding light burst from the stone. It took a while before it dissipated, and a string of numbers slowly floated into appearance.

"This..." Upon seeing the number on the stone, Elder Wei's body jolted. Even Zhang Xuan was dumbfounded.

"H-how can this be?"

Two digits sat quietly on top of the Spirit Gauging Stone—11!

"Didn't you say that the tenth level is the highest level? Why does the result reflect 11?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"I-I have no idea!" Elder Wei was bewildered.

Based on what she knew, the tenth level was the highest level achievable. Only one who had reached this peak was qualified to enchant the Spirit Awakener Mountain and become the next Spirit Awakener Sovereign. For 11 to appear... what did this mean?

Suddenly, a thought came to Elder Wei's mind, and she spoke with a quivering voice. "C-could it be... this is the level of aptitude of the founder?"

"The level of aptitude of the founder?" Zhang Xuan asked in incomprehension.

"According to the legends, the founder of our Spirit Awakener Guild, known to the world as the Fairy of Spirit Enchantment, possessed an aptitude above ten in spirit enchantment, reaching a level beyond our imaginations. It's for this reason that she was able to turn an entire mountain into a powerful artifact and enchant it. Back in that era, even Kong shi was fearful of her. It should have been impossible for an individual as talented as our founder to appear once more, but to think that I would meet such an individual in my lifetime!" Elder Wei's breathing hastened as her face flushed crimson.

She had originally hoped to find a genius of the tenth level to restore glory to the guild, but to think that she would actually find a genius of the eleventh level instead!

She could hardly imagine what this represented!

As long as they groomed her well, she could potentially become a figure as powerful as their founder!

"Young lady, do you wish to follow me back to the Spirit Awakener Guild?" Elder Wei asked anxiously.

She had definitely found a treasure this time around! If she could get the other party to return with her, the Spirit Awakener Guild would reach greater heights in the near future, perhaps even ushering another era of greatness for them!

"I..." Wang Ying had not expected for her aptitude in spirit enchantment to be so great, either. Panicked, she could not help but turn to the young man. "Teacher, I'll listen to your will..."

No matter how good her aptitude in spirit enchantment was, the will of her teacher was much more important.

"Principal Zhang!" Elder Wei glanced at Zhang Xuan anxiously.

"This..." Slightly hesitant, Zhang Xuan turned to Wang Ying and said, "Execute a punching routine for me."

"Yes!" Nodding, Wang Ying swiftly executed an elegant but powerful set of punches.

Hu la!

Her punch tore through the air like a sharp spear, creating a sharp gust of wind.

This was a fist art that she had just learned from Zhang Xuan, but she had already achieved considerable mastery in it.

Hu!

A book appeared in the Library of Heaven's Path.

Zhang Xuan placed his finger on it, and the information concerning Wang Ying flowed into his mind.

Swiftly looking through it, a frown emerged on his forehead.

There was nothing concerning Wang Ying's talent as a spirit awakener inside at all. To be more exact, there was not anything that hinted at it either.

Is the Library of Heaven's Path no longer accurate? Zhang Xuan was perplexed.

The Library of Heaven's Path had reflected information on Zhao Ya's Pure Yin Body the first time he met her, and the same went for Yuan Tao and Wei Ruyan as well.

So, why was Wang Ying's aptitude in spirit enchantment not reflected in her Library of Heaven's Path book?

Does the Library of Heaven's Path not reflect acquired constitutions? Back then, Lu Chong's Combat Soul Constitution wasn't reflected in it either, Zhang Xuan wondered.

Back then, the Library of Heaven's Path did not reflect the reason behind Lu Chong's massive soul. It was only through Mo Hunsheng that he learned of the Combat Soul Constitution and that Lu Chong was suited to learn soul arts.

Most likely, the situation was the same with Wang Ying as well. It might not have been an ability she was born with, and perhaps due to certain conditions of the Library of Heaven's Path, it wasn't reflected in it.

Wang Ying has a conscientious personality, and she is far more meticulous than any of my other students in deciphering the simplified Heaven's Path Divine Art that I impart to them. Perhaps it might be the work of her personality and the prowess of the Heaven's Path Divine Art at work that resulted in a change in her constitution, granting her such talents, Zhang Xuan deduced.

Fate is not something that is fixed. Not even the massive hands of the heavens are capable of grasping everything.

In truth, whether it was Lu Chong or Wang Ying, their talent could only be considered average among countless others in the Master Teacher Continent. However, despite the deficiencies that fate had given them, they had still ended up meeting Zhang Xuan and cultivated the powerful Heaven's Path Divine Art, thus changing their lives for good.

For better or for worse, destiny was a capricious power.

Perhaps, even the seemingly omnipotent Library of Heaven's Path was not infallible before the capricious nature of the world.

In teaching a student, it's important to assess their talents individually and cultivate their strengths. However, it is also important to assess their growth and make alterations accordingly. There are some who might not show aptitude in a certain craft initially, but a sudden bout of enlightenment could bring about massive growth in their capabilities in the field. When such a situation happens, it wouldn't do to continue viewing them as a weaker student and teaching them as such...

A sudden enlightenment sprouted within Zhang Xuan's mind. He felt as if he was on the verge of coming onto something important, but when he tried to grasp it, it seemed to elude him.

He tried to delve deeper, to grab hold of it, but at that moment, Elder Wei's voice jolted him back to reality. "Principal Zhang!"

Raising his gaze, Zhang Xuan saw the middle-aged lady looking at him anxiously.

She really wanted to take Wang Ying away, but she could keenly sense the deep relationship between the teacher and student. If the latter was unwilling to go with her, it could create some feelings of aversion between Wang Ying and the Spirit Awakener Guild.

"Un." Shaking his head, Zhang Xuan knew that this wasn't the time for him to be thinking about other matters. Turning back to Wang Ying, he asked, "Are you willing to head to the Spirit Awakener Guild?"

In such situations, what was important was not his opinion but his student's. His role was only to help guide the latter along the road of life.

"I..." Wang Ying frowned in a dilemma.

"At the Spirit Awakener Guild, you will be entitled to a great pool of cultivation resources and a complete heritage. Naturally, you

will also advance much quicker through the ranks. However, even if you choose to follow behind me, I am confident that I'll be able to bring you to the same height eventually!" Zhang Xuan looked at Wang Ying calmly with deep confidence in his eyes.

Heading to the Spirit Awakener Guild was a good opportunity, but even if Wang Ying did not wish to take the opportunity, Zhang Xuan was still confident that he could groom her into becoming one of the strongest experts on the Master Teacher Continent.

The ultimate decision lay in the hands of the young lady before him.

A deeply conflicted look surfaced on Wang Ying's little face. A moment later, she spoke up meekly. "Teacher, I... Just like Zhao Ya, Yuan Tao, and the others, I wish to share your troubles as well. I don't want to continue being a burden to you!"

If she opted to follow her teacher, she would surely reach incredible heights in the future. In fact, she did not think that the heritage of the Spirit Awakener Guild could compare with her teacher's lectures. But... as her cultivation grew, the resources she required to advance through each realm would increase exponentially. Even though her teacher had never uttered a word of complaint about the matter, she could not bring herself to keep dragging her teacher back. She wanted to become a person worthy of standing beside her teacher to assist him, and not baggage that was dragging him down all the time.

If she headed to the Spirit Awakener Guild and became the Spirit Awakener Sovereign, she could gain power swiftly. With her newfound strength, she would be able to help her teacher in his time of need.

She had not heard it from Zhao Ya herself, but she felt that it was with the same conviction that the latter had made the decision to join the Glacier Plain Court.

And the same went for Zheng Yang as well.

As the first student his teacher accepted, she could not bring herself to continue selfishly leeching off him.

On the other hand, upon hearing Wang Ying's words, Zhang Xuan shook his head and sighed. "You are my student, how can you possibly be a burden to me?"

They had only been together for a short year, but the experiences that they had gone through together were unforgettable. The bond between them was one that would never be severed.

Wang Ying might have thought that she was a burden, but to him, she was family. How could a family member possibly be a burden?

Hearing Zhang Xuan's words, Wang Ying's eyes reddened. She was silent for a moment before resolution filled her eyes, and she declared, "I want to head to the Spirit Awakener Guild!"

Teacher, I know that you view me as your family, but it's the same for me as well!

This is an opportunity for me to grow and soar into the greater sky. In the past, you have sheltered me from the storm, and now, it should be my turn to protect you!

That's because... we are a family!

Zhang Xuan lowered his head and nodded silently.

A long moment later, he said, "Since you have made your decision, go on then!"

All parties must eventually come to an end. Even though he knew that it was just a matter of time before his students would leave his side, separation was still difficult for him each time.

Of his seven direct disciples, Zhao Ya had gone to the Glacier Plain Court, Lu Chong had headed to the Ancient Domain of Soul Oracles, Yuan Tao had returned to his clan, Wei Ruyan had left for the Poison Hall, and Zheng Yang had departed for the Combat

Master Hall headquarters...

Five had already left his side.

And now, the sixth was leaving him, too.

Of course, Zhang Xuan was glad to see that they were grasping the opportunities before them. With these opportunities, he had no doubt that they would reach incredible heights.

Just that... the rational mind and the sentimental heart were two separate organs in the body. He knew that it was better for them, but such rationality did little to alleviate the sorrow of separation.

"Teacher, you must take care of yourself..." Kneeling on the ground, Wang Ying spoke hoarsely before making eight resounding kowtows.

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded before placing a finger lightly on her forehead. A surge of Heaven's Path zhenqi flowed into her body.

Placing his hands behind his back, Zhang Xuan said, "If you meet with any danger in the future, just activate this surge of zhenqi, and I'll know, no matter how far away I am. If anyone dares bully you, even if the other party is the strongest sect on the continent or even the Master Teacher Pavilion itself, I'll definitely redress your grievances!"

His tone was impassive, but the conviction in his voice was clear for all to hear.

"Un." Wang Ying nodded as she flashed a smile at Zhang Xuan.

Zhang Xuan turned to Elder Wei and said, "Elder Wei, I'll leave my student to you. I hope that you will treat her properly. If I ever learn that she has suffered the slightest grievance in the Spirit Awakener Guild headquarters, know that I'll visit there personally and demand an explanation."

To be threatened by a mere Saint 2-dan cultivator, it was natural that Elder Wei was unhappy. However, knowing that the other

party was standing up for his own student, her heart still softened a little. "Don't worry. Our Spirit Awakener Guild will surely protect her with everything that we have; we won't allow her to suffer the slightest grievance, so you need not worry!"

For five thousand years, there had not been a single spirit awakener whose aptitude had reached the tenth level. It was not easy for one who possessed an aptitude of the eleventh level to appear, so how could they allow anything to happen to her?

After all, the future of the Spirit Awakener Guild was at stake over here!

"That would be for the best." Zhang Xuan could tell that there was not any falsehood in the other party's words, and he nodded in satisfaction. Then, he turned around and waved his hand. "Since this matter is decided, it would be best for you to leave now!"

Unlike Zhao Ya's decisiveness, Wang Ying had a soft heart. The longer they delay the matter, the more likely that Wang Ying would hesitate and change her mind.

"Teacher..."

How could Wang Ying not understand her teacher's intention? Her body trembled, and tears trickled down her cheeks.

Elder Wei walked up to Wang Ying and said, "Let's go."

"Un." Wang Ying wiped her tears and nodded.

Elder Wei then turned to Guild Leader Ruan and instructed, "It would be best for us to return to the headquarters as soon as possible, so we won't be staying tonight."

After finding such a genius, it would be safer to escort her back to the headquarters as soon as possible to prevent any mishaps from occurring.

Or else, if something really happened on the way, it would be too late for tears.

After which, she turned to look at Zhang Xuan one last time and said, "Principal Zhang, we'll be taking our leave now."

Hu!

Right after saying those words, Elder Wei drove her zhenqi and leaped into the sky together with Wang Ying. In the blink of an eye, the both of them had already disappeared over the horizon.

The very first student he had accepted ever since transcending over to this world, Wang Ying, had left.

A long time later, Zhang Xuan let out a deep sigh.

Chapter 1139: The Fourth Acknowledgement of Celestial Master Teacher

"Principal Zhang, farewell!" Guild Leader Ruan also took her leave.

With this, aside from Zhang Xuan, only Sun Qiang and Liu Yang remained in the courtyard.

By the time Zhang Xuan turned around once more, Wang Ying and Elder Wei were already nowhere to be seen. With his hands behind his back, he looked into the deep night sky for a long time before saying, "Alright, let's return back in."

What that must go would eventually go.

To become true dragons, they couldn't always remain by his side. How could they mature if they were always sheltered by him?

"Teacher..." Knowing that Zhang Xuan must be grieved over Wang Ying's departure, Liu Yang stepped forward, wanting to say something. However, he suddenly felt someone grabbing his arm, holding him back.

"Let Young Master be alone for a while." Sun Qiang said silently.

Liu Yang turned to look at Sun Qiang and saw the latter shaking his head. He hesitated for a brief moment before nodding and following the latter away.

Indeed. What his teacher needed at the moment were not words of comfort but tranquility.

To see one's students leaving one's side one after another was indeed not easy to bear.

After leaving the courtyard, Liu Yang looked at the dark night, and for some reason, the sky looked exceptionally gloomy tonight. He turned to Sun Qiang and asked, "What can I do for teacher?"

"What you can do for him is to cultivate diligently. Don't let Young Master's efforts go to waste!" Sun Qiang pondered for a brief moment before replying.

Liu Yang contemplated those words for a moment before clenching his fists tightly together. "You're right. Zhao Ya, Lu Chong, Yuan Tao, Wei Ruyan, Zheng Yang, and Wang Ying, they have all left. I am the only one remaining now. I must work hard and grow stronger so as to not let teacher down!"

Back in those days when all of them cultivated together, while he wasn't the one who improved the fastest, he wasn't the slowest either. Training wasn't easy, but he was satisfied.

However, that feeling of satisfaction had long vanished, replaced by immense anxiety and stress.

Zhao Ya, Yuan Tao, Wei Ruyan, and Lu Chong had left to inherit heritages that were suited for their unique constitution. Once they fully awakened their unique constitutions, their cultivation would surely soar through the ranks.

On the other hand, Zheng Yang and Wang Ying had left for the Combat Master Hall and Spirit Awakener Guild respectively, where they would inherit complete heritages and receive top-notch cultivation resources. Without a doubt, they would grow stronger swiftly as well.

Of them all, he was the only one who had remained stationary on the spot.

If he were to lag behind the others, wouldn't it mean that teacher was not on par with those other powers?

"No, this won't do. I have to work harder than ever!" With a complicated look in his eyes, Liu Yang turned around and returned back to his room.

He couldn't waste the slightest bit of time. He must work harder than ever on his cultivation so as to catch up with the others!

As fellow students, he didn't wish to be lagging far behind the others when they met once more. If so, he would truly become a baggage to his teacher.

"Hai..." Noting Liu Yang's response, Sun Qiang shook his head. "Forget it, I shall not compete with those cultivation maniacs. Let me take a walk through the streets and see if there is any delectable food around here..."

Stretching his back lazily, Sun Qiang began making his way out.

Ever since he arrived at Qingyuan City, he had been accompanying the lot from the Xuanxuan Faction, and he hadn't really gone anywhere yet. Since he had time now, it would be good for him to experience the nightlife in Qingyuan City for himself.

He didn't have much interest in cultivation. Otherwise, given that the Young Master had personally tutored him and provided with him with generous cultivation resources, he should have long surpassed Half-Saint by now.

...

Standing quietly on the spot, Zhang Xuan felt an unprecedented feeling of loneliness.

His students had all nearly left him, and Luo Ruoxin was no longer around either. He couldn't help but feel that it wouldn't be long before he was all alone once more.

It was as if he was slowly regressing back into those days of solitude when he first transcended over to this world.

Back then, he was under the constant threat of expulsion, and there was not a student under his name.

Everything was completely foreign to him, but there was not the slightest support or solace he could find from those around him.

"They might learn better and stronger cultivation techniques staying by my side, but... it's for the best that they have left!

Staying by my side will only limit their growth as a person..."

A growth in cultivation was only a small aspect of life. In order to mature into adults, his students would have to venture into the larger world themselves and experience all kinds of things themselves.

As this thought surfaced in his mind, Zhang Xuan suddenly felt like he had grasped hold of that elusive thing he had been clawing at earlier.

"A teacher who truly loves his students would think ahead for them. Grooming a student isn't like forging a weapon, where a forging technique and a blueprint would be sufficient to craft a good weapon. The students have their own life to live. They should experience the many aspects of life themselves, be it joy, anger, sorrow, or bitterness, and they should find their own goal and struggle for it too! If I were to just keep them by my side, all I can offer them is knowledge. They might be able to grow powerful this way as well, but I would be depriving them of an opportunity to temper themselves, and they would never be able to become true experts this way. The fact that they are leaving my side shows that they have already matured..."

Hong long!

His mind jolted, and a sound reminiscent of the rumbling of thunder echoed in his head. In the next moment, a unique aura abruptly descended from the sky and shrouded his figure.

The fourth acknowledgement of Celestial Master Teacher!

Tzzzzzzzz!

That unique energy dived into his body, raising his Soul Depth swiftly.

At the same time, he fell into a trance, and his aura gradually grew deeper and steadier.

...

The Conference Hall of the Combat Master Hall.

"Hall Master Xing, here is the compilation of the combat knowledge we have learned from the Xuanxuan Faction over the past few days. According to them, they were all imparted from Principal Zhang!" the head of the Footwork Division, Lu Wangqiu, took out a few thick books.

He had only left to the Xuanxuan Faction to study. It didn't mean that he was never coming back to the Combat Master Hall.

Hall Master Xing casually flipped open the first book and began browsing through it. Before long, his eyes lit up in excitement.

When he finally browsed through the books and mused over their content, he couldn't help but exclaim, "Principal Zhang is indeed a genius. His understanding of combat has reached an unfathomable level! As simple as these theories may seem, they are directed towards the very crux of cultivation. Through this knowledge, our combat masters will be able to easily find the flaws of any battle technique and overcome them easily!"

He had never known that combat could be interpreted in such a straightforward and refreshing manner. As expected of Yang shi's direct disciple, Principal Zhang was truly an incredible figure!

"Indeed. I was paying close heed when he conducted the lecture earlier during the exchange, and even though the knowledge he had imparted was simple, it was extremely enlightening. I felt that many new windows have opened up for my cultivation just by listening to his lecture!" the head of the Palm Division, Yan Qinghai, added.

The other division heads also nodded in agreement.

If they were still a little opposed to joining the Xuanxuan Faction before, after the exchange they had, such a feeling had vanished entirely. If anything, they would be delighted to join the Xuanxuan Faction at this point!

As long as they were to study diligently, they could foresee the overall prowess of the Combat Master Hall increasing by leaps and bounds.

"It seems like it's the correct decision for us to participate in the exchange..." Hall Master Xing nodded in agreement. However, halfway through his words, he suddenly sensed something, and his eyes narrowed in astonishment.

Huala!

The other division heads seemed to have sensed the same thing that he did as well, and they hurriedly got to their feet.

"Let's head over to take a look!"

Without any hesitation, Hall Master Xing dashed out. Not too long later, he arrived at a massive hall located a short distance away from the Conference Hall.

Placed within the hall were the tablets of the outstanding predecessors of the Combat Master Hall, as well as a sculpture of their founder.

Upon stepping into the hall, they saw the tablets and the sculpture of their founder trembling non-stop, as if they had witnessed something terrifying.

"What's going on?" the head of the Footwork Division, Lu Wangqiu, asked in apprehension.

This was the first time he had seen such an occurrence in the eight hundred years of his life! Furthermore, there was no record of something of this sort happening in the long history of their Combat Master Hall!

Huala!

Just as Hall Master Xing and the other division heads were completely bewildered by the happenings before them, the tablets suddenly fell towards a certain direction. For some reason, their

movement seemed to carry a hint of deference and respect.

At the same time, the sculpture of the founder also fell to the ground. It was as if it had finally encountered an existence worthy of its respect.

"T-this... Could it be..." Upon seeing these happenings, a thought suddenly came to Hall Master Xing's mind, and his eyes narrowed in shock.

"What is it?"

The division heads quickly turned their gazes to him.

As combat masters devoted their time to furthering their combat skills, they weren't as knowledgeable as the master teachers. It was inevitable that they would be ignorant about the various legends and formalities of the Master Teacher Pavilion either.

"Trembling of Myriad Tokens, the Bow of Submission of the Predecessors. This... it is the sign of the birth of a Celestial Master Teacher!" Hall Master Xing said hoarsely, his voice quivering in disbelief.

"Celestial Master Teacher?"

Those words left the faces of the other division heads paling as well.

...

Lu Ran was a master teacher apprentice of the Qingyuan Empire Master Teacher Pavilion.

He was in charge of cleaning and organizing the Teacher Acknowledgement Hall. It should have been his rest day today, but the other apprentice on duty had something urgent on, so he could only fill up for him.

I have already made an appointment with Luo Yan to meet her parents. Damn it, she'll surely hold a grudge against me for this! Lu Ran muttered in distress.

If not for this darned duty, he would have been able to make it for their appointment tonight, and if things go well, he might be able to finally bring the beauty he had been courting back home and officially terminate his long term of singlehood... But due to this darned duty, all of his plans had gone down the drain.

The more he thought about this matter, the more frustrated he felt.

It's only a bunch of lifeless tokens, is there a need to guard them day in day out? Pushing open the door to the Teacher Acknowledgement Hall, Lu Ran looked at the same barren sight before him and shook his head in frustration.

All that was in the Teacher Acknowledgement Hall was a bunch of old tokens and a sculpture of Kong shi.

He understood the need to respect one's ancestors, but those were all lifeless objects! It should suffice to clean them once in a while, surely there should be no need to appoint a guard to specially look over them?

Forget it, I just have to endure this for another half a year. Once I am promoted to an official master teacher, I won't have to do such dreary chores anymore! As an ordinary apprentice, it was inevitable that he would be appointed to carry out some menial labor for the Master Teacher Pavilion. However, once he became a true master teacher, his standing would become completely different from before.

It was true that a 1-star master teacher wasn't anything much in Qingyuan Empire, but a master teacher was still a master teacher. With this identity shielding him, he wouldn't have to live so humbly anymore, being at the beck and call of others.

Forget it, I should just have a good sleep here and apologize to Luo Yan tomorrow morning! Stretching his back lazily, Lu Ran headed to a corner of the Teacher Acknowledge Hall and placed a few cushions together before lying down on it.

Closing his eyes, he was on the verge of sleeping when he suddenly felt the entire hall trembling intensely.

"W-what? What is going on?" Nearly scared of his wits, Lu Ran immediately leaped to his feet in horror.

He was in the Master Teacher Pavilion, the most important ground in Qingyuan Empire! There were many formations erected around it, such that even if an earthquake or avalanche were to occur, the Master Teacher Pavilion would still be able to emerge from it completely intact. And yet... just what in the world could have happened for such intense tremors to occur?

Horried, he scanned the room warily, only to see the many tokens leaping down from their stands.

"This..." Upon seeing this sight, Lu Ran's body shuddered in fear.

He had never encountered or heard of such a situation before!

Those tokens should have been lifeless objects! In the past, when he was cleaning those tokens, he had accidentally knocked down some of them, but it was not as if anything had happened to him...

Why would they suddenly come to life, jumping down from their stands?

Hualala!

Falling to the ground, they stood in a neat row, as if filing in on someone's command, and with a simultaneous action, they turned to look in a specific direction.

Completely chilled by that eerie sight, Lu Ran hid in the corner, covering his mouth tightly with his trembling hands. He was afraid that if he would be killed if he were to make a move at this moment.

Hong long!

Just as he was considering whether he should quietly sneak out of the room to report this matter to the pavilion master, he

suddenly saw the unmoving sculpture of Kong shi coming to life as well. It turned around and looked in the same direction as the tokens.

Its eyes were deep and distant, reminiscent to that of a living person.

In that instant, Lu Ran even forgot how to breathe. Kong shi's sculpture slowly lowered its back and clasped its fist.

"Greetings, my comrade!"

Chapter 1140: Zhang Xuan Visits a Courtesan House (1)

Some time later, Zhang Xuan finally opened his eyes.

The acknowledgement of Celestial Master Teacher this time around lasted much longer than before. Under the tempering of the unique aura, his aura became much sharper, and his thoughts became clearer than ever.

Even though there was no tangible increase in his strength, the sharper clarity of his thoughts granted him better reflexes than before.

At the same time, his Eye of Insight had also become keener. With his sharper perception, his ability to disguise himself was also enhanced too. As long as he willed it so, not even an 8-star master teacher would be able to notice anything unusual about him.

On top of that, in the past, he was only able to discern flaws of individuals or objects which corresponded to a maximum to four cultivation stage higher than him, but now, he could see through the cultivation of those whose fighting prowess was on par with him.

To put it in more direct terms... he was able to see through the flaws and openings in the cultivation of Primordial Spirit pinnacle experts!

In the future, if he were to encounter such Saint 4-dan pinnacle experts, even without the Library of Heaven's Path, he would be able to analyze their flaws just with his Eye of Insight and subdue them with ease.

"The growth of my Eye of Insight is great, but what is truly significant is that my Soul Depth... has increased by 2.0 once more!" Zhang Xuan thought in excitement.

The changes in the Eye of Insight was great, but what that had left him the most excited was the explosive rise in his Soul Depth.

This acknowledgement of Celestial Master Teacher had increased his Soul Depth by a whole 2.0!

After undergoing the Saint Ascension Ordeal, his Soul Depth had already been increased to 23.1, putting him on par with 7-star pinnacle master teachers. With this further increase by 2.0, it had reached a staggering 25.1, putting him on an equivalent level as 8-star high-tier master teachers!

With his enhanced Soul Depth, even 7-star pinnacle master teachers would succumb easily to his Impartation of Heaven's Will and willingly submit to him.

"As long as I know their cultivation technique, I should be able to faze even 8-star low-tier master teachers with my Impartation of Heaven's Will!" Zhang Xuan thought with clenched fists.

For the Impartation of Heaven's Will to work, the knowledge which one was lecturing must be aligned with the essence of the world. Those who were able to become an 8-star master teacher were all individuals with near transcendental state of minds. At their level, a lecture of fundamentals would do little to faze their mind. However, if Zhang Xuan could uncover their cultivation technique and correct it, beguiling them with his Impartation of Heaven's Will shouldn't be too difficult.

"Speaking of which, my Soul Depth has already long reached the mark required for me to become a 7-star master teacher. It should be about time for me to start preparing to take the 7-star master teacher examination..." Zhang Xuan thought as he exhaled deeply.

More often than not, the limiting factor to a master teacher was his Soul Depth. High Soul Depth enhanced one's rate of cultivation and learning, so once one's Soul Depth reached the mark, one's cultivation and supporting occupations would swiftly follow suit.

At the moment, the conflict between the Xuanxuan Faction and the Combat Master Hall seemed to be resolved. The members from both organizations were getting along amicably with one another, so that was a burden off his mind.

With that, it was about time for him to focus on his own personal matters. It would be good to pay a visit to the Master Teacher Pavilion, meet some old friends, and obtain a 7-star master teacher emblem while he was at it.

For this 6-star master teacher examination, he had chosen to challenge Empire Building. It was the most difficult examination, but its benefits lay in that he would be automatically entitled to the 7-star master teacher emblem once he met the prerequisites for the promotion.

His Soul Depth and cultivation definitely met the mark for promotion, so what was lacking was his supporting occupations.

So far, the occupations which he had achieved a mastery of 7-star in were spirit awakener, demonic tunist, and poison master. His other occupations, such as apothecary, blacksmith, and the sort, were still at 6-star.

Of them, the spirit awakener was not considered as a unique occupation, and it wouldn't reflect well on his reputation if it was revealed that he practiced poison arts. Thus, he only had a single 7-star supporting occupation at the moment...

"In order to qualify as a 7-star master teacher, I'll require seven 7-star supporting occupations. Currently, other than appraiser and soul oracle, my other occupations are at 6-star pinnacle."

In his long journey, Zhang Xuan had picked up a total of twelve supporting occupations, and they were namely: 7-star spirit awakener, 7-star demonic tunist, 7-star poison master, 6-star blacksmith, 6-star physician, 6-star painter, 6-star beast tamer, 6-star celestial designer, 6-star terpsichore, 6-star formation master, 5-star appraiser, and last but not least... soul oracle!

It went without saying that he couldn't use his spirit awakener, poison master, and soul oracle occupation, so he had only had the remaining nine to rely on.

"For formation master, I have already achieved the level of 7-star, and Guild Leader Han has already helped me apply for an emblem. If nothing goes wrong, I should be able to collect it very soon."

Back at the Qiu Wu Palace, Zhang Xuan had managed advanced his mastery as a formation master straight to 7-star pinnacle. In view of that, Guild Leader Han, as the head of the Qingyuan Empire Formation Master Guild, had taken the initiative to apply for the 7-star emblem for him, so he didn't have to go through the trouble of taking the examination.

But even so, he only had two 7-star supporting occupations with that.

He still needed another five more.

"With my current identity, I should be able to access the libraries of the respective guilds directly. As long as I work fast, I should be able to be done with it in a single day..." Zhang Xuan thought.

To others, advancing their supporting occupations was a lengthy and tiresome process, requiring them to work diligently over a long period of time to brush their knowledge and skills up to par. However, to Zhang Xuan, it was truly nothing at all.

Even if he were to take his time, he should be able to accomplish it within two days easily.

"As the capital of a Tier-1 Empire, most major guilds can be found in Qingyuan City, such as the Apothecary Guild, Physician Guild, and the Beast Tamer Guild. However, I wonder if there is any Terpsichorean Guild, Celestial Designer Guild, and the others here as well..."

As Zhang Xuan had mainly spent his time training the Combat Master Hall over the past three days, he still hadn't gotten a clear

grasp over the layout of Qingyuan City yet. As such, he had no idea what kind of guilds there were here and where they were located either. If he could uncover this information beforehand, he would be spared much time fumbling around the city looking for the occupation guilds.

With this thought in mind, Zhang Xuan walked out of his room and shouted, "Sun Qiang, Sun Qiang!"

Sun Qiang would always gather intelligence from the locals as soon as they arrived in a new city, so there was no one apter than him to ask.

"Teacher, Butler Sun headed out last night, and he isn't back yet!" Hearing Zhang Xuan's shouting, Liu Yang walked out and said.

After they parted the previous night, Sun Qiang left the Combat Master Hall, and even till morning, there was still no trace of the latter to be seen.

Zhang Xuan frowned, "Do you know where he went then?"

"I'm not too sure either. However, I have already entrusted some friends from the Combat Master Hall to help look into this matter." Liu Yang quickly replied.

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded. "Tell him to look for me as soon as he returns."

This wasn't the first time Sun Qiang had stayed out overnight, so Zhang Xuan was not particularly worried about him. In any case, the Combat Master Hall was already looking for him, so it shouldn't be long before the other party returned.

"Noted!" Liu Yang nodded.

After which, Zhang Xuan began making his way over to Hall Master Xing's residence.

Since Sun Qiang wasn't around, he could only seek Hall Master Xing for help.

"You wish to brush up your supporting occupations and push for a promotion to 7-star master teacher?" Hearing the intent behind Zhang Xuan's visit, Hall Master Xing replied with a smile.

"That's right!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

"Elder Qi happens to be the old head of the Physician Guild, and given your deep mastery in the Way of Medicine, it shouldn't be too difficult for him to apply for a 7-star physician emblem, so there is no need for you to take the physician examination either."

Hall Master Xing smiled. "Furthermore, the head of the Apothecary Guild, Wu Huayu, has heard news that you are currently residing in our Combat Master Hall. In a conversation we had recently, he indicated that he has helped you apply for a 7-star apothecary emblem, and he intends to pay you a visit and hand the emblem over to you personally some time soon."

"Wu Huayu?" Zhang Xuan was startled.

That name was astonishingly familiar to him. It was the apothecary whom he challenged during the Pill Debate conducted via the Communication Jade Screen back when he was at the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy Apothecary School! Back then, he had given the latter several pointers in his pill forging, and in exchange, the latter had helped him apply for the Grand Intermittence Grass he needed to save Wei Ruyan...

All along, he had thought that the other party was a small fry in the Qingyuan Empire Apothecary Guild. Who could have thought that the other party would actually turn out be the head of the Apothecary Guild...

Later on, it seemed like the other party had come over to Hongyuan Empire personally to deliver the Grand Intermittence Grass, but Zhang Xuan happened to be out with Luo Ruoxin during that period of time, so they missed one another.

"Factoring in those two occupations, I would have four 7-star

supporting occupations at the moment. I would just need three more in order to qualify as a 7-star master teacher!" Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief and smiled.

It would have surely taken quite a bit of effort if he had to go through the various occupations one after another. Naturally, it would be for the best if he could save some time.

"As for the location of the respective guilds... Our Qingyuan City doesn't have a Celestial Designer Guild, and the Beast Tamer Guild is located in a mountain range roughly two hundred li away from the city. However, the Terpsichore Guild, Appraiser Guild, and Painter Guild are located in the city, so you could consider going for them instead." Hall Master Xing explained.

"I see. I'll head to the Terpsichore Guild first then." Zhang Xuan nodded.

Since the Beast Tamer Guild wasn't in the city, it would be more efficient if he could clear all the examinations within the city before heading there.

"Alright, allow me to bring you over then..." Hall Master Xing nodded.

"It's fine, it's fine. There's no need to trouble Hall Master Xing over a minor matter like this. You just have to tell me the location, and I'll head there myself." Zhang Xuan replied with a smile.

He was only taking the examination for a supporting occupation, it would be an overkill if he were to have the head of the Combat Master Hall accompany him there. That would raise too much of a commotion, and it went without saying that it was at odds with his intention of maintaining a low profile.

"That works too. However, the branch of the Terpsichore Guild in Qingyuan Empire... is located at a location which might be a little awkward for you to visit..." At this point, Hall Master Xing suddenly recalled a matter, and a peculiar expression appeared on

his face.

"Awkward for me to visit?"

"Un. You have learned terpsichorean arts yourself too, so you should know that terpsichoreans utilize dance as an intermediary for their offense, and the location where dancers are the most sought after happens to be the... Spring Pavilion!" Hall Master Xing continued.

"Spring Pavilion?" Zhang Xuan was perplexed. "Is that the name of the Terpsichorean Guild branch in Qingyuan City?"

"It is... the name of a courtesan house!" Hall Master Xing replied awkwardly.

"A courtesan house?" Zhang Xuan's lips twitched.

"Yes, but it isn't the kind which you are thinking of. The courtesans there sell their craft, not their bodies. Nevertheless, it is still one of the most popular spots in the city with huge crowds walking in and out of its doors every day!" Hall Master Xing said.

Typically speaking, those who opted to learn terpsichorean arts were top-notch beauties with excellent figures. A dance from them could easily enchant them, leaving them craving for more.

But still, for an orthodox unique occupation to run a courtesan house... just the thought of it sounded deeply inconceivable.

"The founder of the Terpsichore Guild, Elder Gong Sun, had her entire family massacred by an enemy back when she was still at a young age. She spent many years of her life refining her craft as a dancer, and eventually, she managed to exact vengeance on her enemy. After that, under Kong shi's guidance, she founded the terpsichore occupation. However, in acknowledgement of her past as a dance courtesan, most of the Terpsichore Guild branches are still established as courtesan houses." Hall Master Xing explained.

Zhang Xuan nodded in realization.

He had learned about the history of Elder Sun Qian through the books in the Master Teacher Academy, but as most of them were carefully selected by master teachers, the portion regarding Elder Sun Qiang being a dance courtesan was probably intentionally left out due to it being viewed as dishonorable.

"Nevertheless, Kong shi didn't look down on Elder Sun Qian despite her occupation. Instead, he said that there was no such thing as a lowly occupation; there were only lowly individuals in the world. As long as dance courtesans lived their life with dignity, they were individuals worthy of respect too. It is with this philosophy in mind that terpsichore eventually managed to become a unique occupation as well."

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded.

Kong shi was right.

Every single occupation had to be respected. Even the most ordinary occupation served a vital purpose in this world, so they shouldn't be disregarded and looked down upon.

As expected of Kong shi, his state of mind had indeed transcended mere forms.

"Where is the Spring Pavilion you spoke of located?" Tossing aside the prejudice in his mind, Zhang Xuan asked.

"It's located not too far away from the Combat Master Hall. After you leave here, turn left and head straight for roughly ten li, and you should see it." Hall Master Xing said.

After getting the location of the other two guilds out of Hall Master Xing, Zhang Xuan finally clasped his fist and bade farewell, "Alright, I'll be heading over to take a look now. Farewell."

After leaving the residence of Hall Master Xing, before Zhang Xuan could even step out of the Combat Master Hall, he saw a young lady hurriedly walking towards him.

"Zhang shi, are you heading out? Why don't you bring me along

with you?"

Chapter 1141: Zhang Xuan Visits a Courtesan House (2)

The young lady was dressed in a light blue dress which shaped her elegant figure perfectly. A yellow silk belt wrapped around her waist accentuated the curves between her waist and her bottom. From afar, she looked like a bewitching succubus who would steal one's soul away at any time.

The person wasn't anyone else other than the head of the Bewitching Imp Faction, Hu Yaoyao.

The Bewitching Imp Faction was dissolved shortly after Zhang Xuan became the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, and Hu Yaoyao officially joined the Xuanxuan Faction right afterward, becoming one of the strongest cultivators in its ranks.

"You want to tag along with me? That's fine." Seeing that it was Hu Yaoyao, Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement.

Hu Yaoyao's main supporting occupation in the Master Teacher Academy was terpsichorean arts, and she was even the direct disciple of School Head Wei Ranxue. Since he was heading to the Terpsichore Guild, it would be good to bring her along as well.

"We want to go too!"

Shortly after Zhang Xuan accepted her request, another voice sounded not too far away. Turning his head over, he saw Yu Fei-er and Luo Qiqi standing not too far away, staring at him intently.

Looking at the curiosity in the eyes of the duo, Zhang Xuan shook his head and advised, "It would be best for the both of you to stay out of this matter. It isn't appropriate for the both of you to visit such a place!"

"It isn't appropriate? Why can Hu Yaoyao tag along with you but not us?" Yu Fei-er frowned in displeasure.

It was one thing if the other party refused to bring all of them with him, but he had agreed to bring Hu Yaoyao along! This blatant discrimination left her feeling deeply indignant within, and her explosive temper flared up in an instant.

Was Hu Yaoyao that important to him?

On the other hand, while Luo Qiqi didn't say a word, the unhappy gaze she shot him spoke the very same words too.

"I'm heading to the Spring Pavilion, which happens to be a courtesan house too! As ladies, it won't be appropriate for you two to tag along." Zhang Xuan explained.

"You are heading to a courtesan house?"

"With Hu Yaoyao at that?"

The duo exchanged gazes for a brief instant, and with uncanny harmony, they stretched their hands forward simultaneously to block Zhang Xuan's path. "No way, not over my dead body!"

"Stop fooling around, I'm heading there because I have important matters to attend to." Zhang Xuan frowned upon seeing their actions.

It was in view of their relatively mature characters that he treated the both of them well, patiently guiding them along whenever they faced any problem. Why were they suddenly throwing a tantrum at this moment?

Seeing that Zhang Xuan was starting to get a little annoyed by their actions, Yu Fei-er bit her lips and continued on, "Zhang shi, you are a master teacher, so how can you go to such a place? If you really... need to... I can help you.."

"Help me?" Zhang Xuan shook his head.

Help me? How do you intend to help me?

Can you give me a 7-star terpsichore emblem or a 7-star master teacher emblem?

To offer your help despite not knowing what is going on, aren't you worried that I might sell you out?

Sighing deeply, Zhang Xuan said, "I appreciate your good intentions, but I'm afraid that you aren't sufficient to help me on this matter..."

"You say that I am insufficient? How am I insufficient? I am very sufficient, alright?" Yu Fei-er immediately lashed out as she stuck out her chest indignantly.

Is he scorning me for being not up to par with Hu Yaoyao?

This is too much. Isn't hers just a little bigger?

Mine is not too bad either, alright!

Besides... insufficient? How do you know that I would be insufficient?

Just as she was feeling deeply stifled within, the young man continued speaking.

"Spring Pavilion is the branch of the local Terpsichore Guild, and I intend to head there to take the 7-star terpsichore examination so as to rake up the required supporting occupations for a promotion to 7-star master teacher. Hu Yaoyao's main supporting occupation is terpsichore, so it would be beneficial for her to head there too. On the other hand, your main supporting occupation is formation master, so it might not be appropriate for you to tag along too."

Zhang Xuan was speechless.

You don't even know the slightest thing about terpsichorean arts, and you still want to help me? This naivety is truly...

"Terpsichore Guild branch? 7-star terpsichore?" Yu Fei-er froze upon hearing those words, and in the next moment, her face flushed crimson.

Clearly, she was unaware of the matter too.

When she heard the words 'courtesan house', her thoughts

immediately turned carnal... It was fortunate that the other party didn't seem to understand what she was driving at, or else she would be too embarrassed to meet anyone.

"Why would the branch of the Terpsichore Guild be a courtesan house?"

The one who had asked this time around was Hu Yaoyao. It seemed like despite being a terpsichore herself, she wasn't too aware of its history either.

In truth, just like Yu Fei-er and Luo Qiqi, she honestly thought that Zhang Shi was going to bring her to that kind of place! She was still feeling conflicted as to how she should respond should the other party raise some kind of unreasonable demand there, whether she should turn him down or accept him... But to think that the courtesan house would actually be the branch of a Terpsichore Guild instead!

"The history of terpsichore can be traced back to dance courtesan. Furthermore, only by frequently performing for others will one be able to advance her terpsichorean art swiftly and bring forth greater prowess in battle. As such, most of the Terpsichore Guilds, other than the branches set up within the Master Teacher Academies, are courtesan houses..." Having understood what was going on, Luo Qiqi swiftly explained slightly awkwardly.

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan was slightly surprised to see that Luo Qiqi even knew of this matter, and he nodded in agreement.

With this, Yu Fei-er finally understood what was going on, but that only served to make her face redder than ever. Nevertheless, she still bucked up her courage and stared at Zhang Xuan intently, "I still want to tag along with you!"

"Teacher, I wish to follow you too!" Luo Qiqi added.

"... Alright then, you can follow me there if you really want to." Seeing that he was unable to talk the duo out of the matter, Zhang

Xuan eventually conceded.

In any case, it was not like he was going there to do something that couldn't be seen. He was only intending to take the terpsichore examination, so it mattered not whether he brought another person with him or not.

Soon, the group of four set forth from the Combat Master Hall, and after traveling roughly ten li, a massive building appeared before their eyes.

Even before coming close, they could already hear the excited voices within. There was a constant huge crowd walking to and fro the building, a truly bustling sight.

Almost the entirety of the crowd were young men, and judging from their extravagant dress up, they were likely to be from considerable backgrounds too.

"Too beautiful, she's truly too beautiful!"

"Indeed! I would die just for an opportunity to share a night with a fairy like her!"

"Die? I would be willing to die ten times over for that!"

"Stop the talking and get moving. Fairy Zi Yan's dance is about to begin..."

...

Such heated discussions could be heard all around the place. There was an excited gleam in the eyes of every single young man walking in or out of the building.

"It seems like terpsichore is a celebrated occupation in Qingyuan Empire!" Zhang Xuan noted.

He had been to many guilds over the past year, but it was truly rare to see one as lively as this.

"Who knows if it's really the occupation that is celebrated..." Yu Fei-er harrumphed coldly.

"Alright, let's head in!" With a smile, Zhang Xuan began making his way in as well.

Admittedly, the beauty of a dancing terpsichore was an allure hard for any young man to resist, but beyond that, the dance of terpsichores did help to temper one's soul too. If it wasn't for the latter, it was unlikely that so many cultivators would be so moved over just a few young ladies.

"This brother over here, are you... intending to enter the Spring Pavilion too?" Before Zhang Xuan could walk in, an astonished voice suddenly sounded. Turning around, he saw a young man staring at him with a flabbergasted look.

"What's wrong?" Zhang Xuan asked with a frown.

The other party had an appearance reminiscent of a man in his thirties, and shockingly, his cultivation was higher than Zhang Xuan's, reaching Saint 3-dan primary stage!

To possess such strength at such a young age, it was almost certain that the other party had a prominent background.

"It's nothing, it's just that I find it... weird..." Swiftly taking a glance at Hu Yaoyao and the others, the young man quickly shook his head.

To come to a courtesan house despite having three ravishing beauties by his side... he sure was adventurous!

And the most thing of all, those three ravishing beauties actually agreed to it, coming along with him even...

It wasn't too hard for Zhang Xuan to fathom what the other party was thinking, but he couldn't be bothered to explain himself. With the three ladies following behind him, he made his way over to the entrance.

A lanky attendant stood at the entrance, "Do you have any reservation?"

Zhang Xuan shook his head, "I have something important to do here. I'm not intending to..."

"Everyone that comes here says that he has something important to do. If you don't have a reservation, I'll have to ask you to turn around and leave. Our Spring Pavilion is already at max capacity, so even if you were to enter now, you won't be able to meet Fairy Zi Yan!" said the attendant impatiently.

The attendant didn't seem to care whom the other party was or what background he was from. From the looks of it, he must have encountered such situations often, and he knew very well that no one would dare to cause trouble right before the Terpsichore Guild too.

"We're not here to meet..." Slightly displeased by the self-assuming attitude of the attendant, Zhang Xuan was just about to clarify the matter when the young man whom he had spoken to earlier suddenly appeared by his side.

"This person over here is a buddy of mine. Why? Does my buddy need a reservation to enter the Spring Pavilion too?"

"I-I dare not to! I didn't know that he's Chu gongzi's friend!" the attendant quickly lowered his head respectfully.

"That better the case!" Chu gongzi nodded before turning to Zhang Xuan. "This friend over here, I have a reservation at one of the suites inside. Why don't you join me?"

"This..." Zhang Xuan frowned.

"It's impossible to enter without a reservation. If you can't even enter the Spring Pavilion, you won't be able to accomplish whatever you intend to do here." Chu gongzi reminded with a smile.

"... I'll humbly accept your kind gesture then."

Judging from the huge rejected crowd loitering around the entrance of the Spring Pavilion, it was apparent that it would be

impossible to enter without making any prior reservation. It would be unseemly for him to make a huge ruckus just to step through those doors, so he decisively chose to take the other party up on his offer.

Having thought things through, Zhang Xuan nodded, "Thanks."

"There's no need to stand on ceremony. With just a look, I can tell that you are one who pursues the same path as me. Naturally, it's only right for us to help one another in times of need!" Chu gongzi blinked his eyes, gesturing with an 'I understand' look.

"I..." Seeing how Chu gongzi was acting, Zhang Xuan knew that the other party must be misunderstanding something here. He immediately tried to explain himself, but the other party simply shook off his words leisurely, "Don't worry, I'm not so underhanded as go after the companions of a friend. Since I regard you as my friend, you can be certain that I'll respect your women as well."

Zhang Xuan placed his hand on his forehead.

What the heck was this?

Forget it.

At this point, it didn't feel like there was any point for him to explain anymore. The other party seemed to be so convinced of the matter that anything he said would probably be regarded as a mere excuse out of embarrassment.

Following behind Chu gongzi, it didn't take long for them to arrive at a suite on the second floor.

The room was spacious and clean. It was divided into several smaller rooms which would allow a large group to reside within this space comfortably. More importantly, its walls were made of glass panels, granting one a clear view of everything within the grand hall of the Spring Pavilion. With just a look, Zhang Xuan could tell that the cost of reserving this single room had to be

absurdly high.

"Young Master!" As soon as Chu gongzi entered, several beautiful ladies immediately walked up to welcome him.

They paled in comparison to Hu Yaoyao and the others, but indubitably, they were still charming individuals in their own right.

"Un." Chu gongzi nodded before turning to Zhang Xuan. "They are all my lovers, I told them to come here and wait for me in advance. Well, you also know how watching the dance of a terpsichore can leave a raging flame burning within one's heart. If I don't find an avenue to vent my heat, I might just explode inside..."

"Vent your heat?"

"Indeed. The terpsichores of the Spring Pavilion only sell their craft and not their bodies. Oh, their graceful moves, those slim waists, and that elegant demeanor... Just one look is sufficient to draw out one's soul! Who in the world can bear to just watch and not do?" Chu gongzi shook his head. "Seeing how you have brought a few people of your own over as well, I can see that we are men treading on the same path..."

"Cough cough! Actually, I'm here for another matter." Seeing how the other party was getting more and more ludicrous with everything he said, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but interject. "Actually, I'm here to take the terpsichore e..."

"Don't worry, we are all men. I understand, I understand. Who doesn't want to take a terpsichore home? Ah, how could I forget my manners? My name is Chu Xiang, may I know how I can address you?" With a smile, Chu gongzi introduced himself.

"I am Zhang Xuan." Zhang Xuan replied with a nod.

Previously, his attempts to conceal his name had ended up backfiring badly for him. With this trauma still vivid in his mind,

he decided to just use his real name instead.

In any case, he wasn't here to watch some fairy perform anyway. All he wanted was to take the terpsichore examination.

"So it's Zhang gongzi! I have long heard of your name." With a hearty laugh, Chu Xiang said. Even though he had said that he had long heard of Zhang Xuan, from the looks on his face, it seemed to be just pleasantries.

But that was to be expected. While Zhang Xuan's reputation resounded in the Hongyuan Empire, the same couldn't be said about the Qingyuan Empire. After all, there were many outstanding individuals here.

Chapter 1142: I'm Willing To Offer a Dance To You!

"You're being too polite." Seeing that the other party didn't know him, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

It was for the best that the other party didn't know him. Otherwise, if it were to be known that an honorable master teacher, as well as an esteemed guest of the Combat Master Hall, had visited a courtesan house, his reputation would be dragged through the mud!

"To be honest, Brother Zhang has chosen the right time to visit. Tonight, we have Fairy Ziyuan on the line, and Fairy Ziyan is going to perform her newly learned terpsichorean art too. I can guarantee you that it's going to be a feast for the eyes!" Chu gongzi said excitedly.

"Ziyuan? Ziyan?" Zhang Xuan asked doubtfully.

"You haven't heard of the both of them before?" Noting the confusion in Zhang Xuan's voice, Chu gongzi was taken aback.

Zhang Xuan shook his head.

"To think that you actually wouldn't have heard of them, Brother Zhang, you are really..." Chu gongzi couldn't help but shake his head in disappointment.

When he saw the other party brought a few beautiful ladies with him to the courtesan house, he thought that the other party was a fellow comrade. Who could have thought that he hadn't even heard of the two most famous terpsichores in the Spring Pavilion?

"Are they very famous?"

"Using the word 'famous' on them would be a gross underestimation of their reputation! There's probably no one in the entire Qingyuan City who hasn't heard of them! This is

especially so for Fairy Ziyan. A 7-star terpsichore, her dance had bewitched countless audiences. Who knows how many men have emptied out their fortunes just to see her perform? However, it's a pity that she only performs once a month. For this very day, I had to book this suite a month ahead in advance!" Seeing that Zhang Xuan truly knew nothing at all, Chu gongzi shook his head in disapproval.

"You had to book the suite a month ahead?" Zhang Xuan was speechless.

To go to such an extent just to watch a couple of dances, the other party sure was tenacious.

Chu gongzi was just about to respond to Zhang Xuan's words when the sound of instruments suddenly echoed from the grand hall. He quickly waved his hands and headed towards the seat near the glass wall, "We'll talk later, the performance is about to start soon..."

Soon after, a figure landed daintily on the stage in the grand hall.

The figure was a young lady who seemed to be in her twenties. In contrast to the resplendent violet robe she wore, her feet were bare. However, when she flew across the air, her figure was truly reminiscent of a fairy.

If one were to evaluate her just based on her looks itself, she would be beneath Hu Yaoyao and the others. However, the aura she exuded was reminiscent of a heavenly fairy, one that could ascend into the sky at any moment. It was like fiction had spilled over into reality, making her existence one that was extremely hard to fathom.

Such a feeling was further enhanced by her clothes. Not only was it resplendent and gorgeous, it shaped out her figure perfectly, accentuating her natural grace. At the same time, it bared her skin at the perfect proportion. A little more revealed, and she might have appeared crass; a little less revealed, and she might have

looked plain.

With such, it was inevitable that her appearance could capture every single gaze in the room as soon as she landed.

It was no wonder why Chu gongzi would be so moved by her. If not for the fact that Zhang Xuan's state of mind had already reached a near-transcendental level, he might be tempted to take a few more glances at her while sighing in pleasure.

"This is Fairy Ziyan?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"Of course not! This is Fairy Ziyuan, Fairy Ziyan's junior!" Without turning his gaze from the stage, Chu gongzi replied indignantly.

Seeing how the other party wasn't even willing to tear his eyes away from the stage for a single instant, as if a little boy who had never seen a woman in his life, Zhang Xuan could only shake his head bitterly. Looking out of the glass wall, he took a swift glance of his surroundings. Be it the audiences in the suites beside him or amidst the grand hall below, their eyes were all fixed on the young lady on the stage as well. It was as the young lady had already stolen their souls from the moment she first arrived in the grand hall.

"A dance to steal the world... This is indeed a formidable occupation!" Seeing how everyone was reacting, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but remark in his head.

It was only due to the fact that his mastery in terpsichorean art was equivalent to a 7-star terpsichore and his powerful soul that the other party's dance couldn't faze him. But the same couldn't be said about the others. Their souls were more vulnerable, so it was inevitable that the dance would put them into a deep trance.

"Even though that Fairy Ziyuan is only a 6-star pinnacle terpsichore, her prowess in terpsichorean arts seems to be significantly more refined than Wei Ranxue..."

The head of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy Terpsichore School, as well as Hu Yaoyao's teacher, Wei Ranxue, was a 6-star pinnacle terpsichore too. Her beauty was on par with Fairy Ziyuan, but in terms of the allure of their dances, she didn't even come close to matching up with Fairy Ziyuan.

Every single gesture of the young lady on the stage was just so graceful that others would inadvertently fight their attention completely stolen by it. Clearly, the young lady's comprehension of terpsichorean arts had already achieved an incredible level.

"Esteemed as one the Ten Great Master Teachers, it is inevitable that Wei Ranxue's dance would be a little more rigid in consideration of her reputation. This resulted in the loss of the worldliness in her dance, and the lack of this quality resulted in a steep decline in the prowess of her dances..."

With just a look, Zhang Xuan was able to analyze the problem in Wei Ranxue's dance.

Those who hadn't gone through the vicissitudes of life wouldn't be able to devote feelings into their dance to evoke a certain quality, and as a result of that, their dance would be lacking in appeal.

This appeal was extremely important for bring forth the true prowess of a terpsichorean art in battle.

It was no wonder why the branches of the Terpsichorean Guild were established as courtesan houses. It was indeed beneficial for mastering this occupation.

Without a doubt, if Wei Ranxue were to battle with Fairy Ziyuan, the latter would emerge victorious.

Huala!

While Zhang Xuan was still deep in thoughts, the young lady suddenly twisted gracefully, and a set of beautiful dance moves flowed smoothly from her.

Her dance was silent and tranquil, reminiscent to the soothing atmosphere of a river gently knocking on a boulder amidst a lush, remote mountain. Those watching it instantaneously fell into a unique state of mind which placed their bodies and souls in a state of absolute relaxation.

"Watching such dances regularly will be beneficial to the growth of one's soul..." After taking a short look, Zhang Xuan nodded in approval.

Even though the dance was riddled with so many flaws that he could hardly bring himself to watch it, its effects to place one in a calm state was still undeniable. By immersing themselves into such a state of mind often, one's soul would be nourished.

Perhaps, just like what he had guessed before, the crowd had come not for the allure of the dancers but the pleasurable sensation of one's soul growing...

With such thoughts in mind, he subconsciously turned his head towards Chu Gongzi, only to see the latter's eyes glowing brightly as his saliva dripped all over his clothes.

"Ah?" Astonished, Zhang Xuan swiftly turned his eyes toward the other audience as well.

Just like Chu Gongzi, they were completely absorbed into the dance too. Saliva was trickling down their cheeks, and there was an inexplicably lecherous expression on their faces.

From the looks of the faces, if not for fear of the prowess of the Terpsichore Guild, those men might have rushed forward and committed atrocities.

"It seems like... I have overthought the matter!" Zhang Xuan rubbed his glabella as a bitter smile surfaced on his lips.

Hu!

Very soon, the dance came to an end, and Fairy Ziyuan bowed gracefully before taking her leave.

Following which, a middle-aged lady stepped out, and surveying the crowd, she said, "Tonight, our Spring Pavilion will be auctioning an [Exclusive Dance] from Fairy Ziyuan. If anyone is interested in it, feel free to make a bid. The starting bid is 50 high-tier spirit stones, and every raise must be of 10 high-tier spirit stones at the minimum!"

"Exclusive Dance?" Zhang Xuan asked in confusion.

At this moment, Chu Gongzi had finally recovered from his trance, and he quickly wiped away the drool from his mouth as he explained, "It means that the fairy dance for you personally... Just imagine it in your head, watching the dance of a fairy at close proximity within a private room... how could one not fall into a frenzy over it? It's precisely due to the popularity of Exclusive Dances that they are priced so steeply..."

Zhang Xuan came to a realization.

The execution of terpsichorean arts was extremely taxing on one's soul. Most terpsichores would only be able to dance at her full prowess once or twice per day due to the limitations of their souls. But, who could have thought that such an opportunity could actually be auctioned as a limited commodity too?

For the starting bid of a single dance to be 50 high-tier spirit stones... How fearsome!

Even the private lesson from a 6-star pinnacle master teacher wasn't worth as much!

"I'll offer 60!"

"70!"

"Hah, aren't you embarrassed to be only bidding 70? 100!"

...

A huge commotion broke out on the audience stand. In just a few moments, the price had already exceeded a hundred. Eventually,

the opportunity was auctioned off at a final price of 150 high-tier spirit stones by a gentleman in one of the suites.

To be honest, Zhang Xuan was already doubting his existence at this very moment.

Back when he was still at Hongyuan Empire, he had to toil his body away just to earn a couple of high-tier spirit stones. And yet, the other party had managed to earn a whole 150 high-tier spirit stones just by executing a single dance.

Was this a sign from the heavens that it was high time for him to switch occupations?

With his profound comprehension of terpsichorean arts, his dances should at least be far more valuable than the young lady on the stage!

"Why didn't you bid for Fairy Ziyuan's Exclusive Dance?" Zhang Xuan turned to Chu gongzi and asked curiously.

From the fact that the other party had booked this suite, it could be seen that on top of being a fan of terpsichorean arts, he was also an individual with no lack of money. Logically speaking, he should be interested in an opportunity at an Exclusive Dance with Fairy Ziyuan, so why didn't he make a bid?"

"Naturally, I am saving up my money to purchase Fairy Ziyan's Exclusive Dance!" Chu gongzi replied proudly.

"Fairy Ziyan?"

"Un, that's right. Look, she's coming out now!" Chu gongzi's eyes lit up.

Zhang Xuan quickly turned his head over and saw a huge commotion rippling across the audience stand. Following which, another young lady gracefully flew down onto the stage as well.

This young lady was clearly much more beautiful than Ziyuan, and her figure was more alluring as well. Astonishingly, she was on

par with even Hu Yaoyao!

More importantly, she carried an incredible air of worldliness, seemingly ready to plunge into the river of love with another at any moment.

"A 7-star pinnacle terpsichore... No wonder!" Zhang Xuan remarked internally. This explained why so many people were infatuated with her.

Hu hu!

While Zhang Xuan was still in thought, the young lady beneath began dancing. Her movements were graceful and exquisite, and it seemed to be playing on the souls of the spectators.

Once again, Zhang Xuan turned his head over to look at Chu gongzi, and as expected, the latter was drooling more than ever.

Shaking his head, Zhang Xuan quietly turned his attention back to the dance on the stage.

It must be said that Fairy Ziyan's comprehension of terpsichorean arts had reached an astonishing level. Every single movement of hers seemed to be aligned with the natural beauty of the world, causing even one's heart to beat in tempo with her dance.

"As long as she wills it so, she could easily cause the hearts of every single one here to come to a complete halt with her dance!" Zhang Xuan remarked meaningfully.

If her dance could even control the beating of one's heart, it would be no exaggeration to say that she wielded the life of every single being within this grand hall at this very moment. Truly, no occupations should be underestimated.

Hu!

Before long, the dance came to an end, and the auctioning of Fairy Ziyan's Exclusive Dance began.

"The starting bid of Fairy Ziyan's Exclusive Dance will be 500 high-tier spirit stones, and every increment must not be less than 100. Alright, let's begin the auction right now!" the middle-aged lady announced once more.

"I offer 600!"

"800!"

"1000!"

...

Fairy Ziyan's Exclusive Dance was indeed far more popular than Fairy Ziyuan's. In the blink of an eye, in the literal sense of the phrase, the price had already shot up to 1000 high-tier spirit stones.

"1000 high-tier spirit stones, just to watch a single dance?" Zhang Xuan shook his head bitterly.

If he hadn't seen it with his own eyes, he might have thought that the world had gone mad!

While he was still deep in thought over the matter, he suddenly heard the voice of Chu gongzi sounding beside him, "I offer... a concentrated high-tier spirit stone!"

"A concentrated high-tier spirit stone?" Zhang Xuan was startled for a moment before his eyes widened in shock.

One must know that even the Combat Master Hall only had 10 concentrated high-tier spirit stones! To offer a concentrated high-tier spirit stone just to watch a dance...

This darned prodigal!

"As long as I could obtain an Exclusive Dance from Fairy Ziyan, there's no price too heavy for me to pay!" Noting Zhang Xuan's shocked stare, Chu gongzi replied.

"There's no price too heavy for you to pay?" Zhang Xuan's lips twitched. At this moment, he suddenly recalled a matter, and his

eyes lit up. Getting to his feet, he looked at Chu gongzi confidently and said, "Why don't we do this then? Instead of watching her dance, why don't you give that concentrated high-tier spirit stone to me, and I'll dance for you instead!"

"..." Chu gongzi.

Chapter 1143: Wei Ranxue's Senior

Chu gongzi nearly collapsed onto the ground.

The reason why I wish to watch Fairy Ziyan's Exclusive Dance is because I want some private time with her... Who wants to watch a man like you dance?

I don't have such inclinations!

"Zhang shi, calm down!" Unable to watch it any longer, Hu Yaoyao rushed forward to hold Zhang Xuan back.

Luo Qiqi and Yu Fei-er also slapped their forehead helplessly.

They knew that Zhang shi had always been lacking in EQ, but who could have thought that it would be so dire?

Given how that Chu Xiang fellow was drooling all over his clothes earlier, do you think that it's really the terpsichorean art which he is appreciating?

For you to dance for him...

Honestly, he wouldn't watch it even if you were to pay him, and you still expect him to pay you a concentrated high-tier spirit stone over it? You are really thinking too much!

"Zhang gongzi, I think it would be better for you to dance for these beautiful ladies instead. I'm afraid that I don't have such an interest..." With a face flushed crimson, Chu gongzi finally caught a breather and replied.

"Is that so? What a pity. I have to say that you have missed a really good opportunity!" Zhang Xuan shook his head.

He hadn't offered to dance for the other party out of mere greed for the money. Instead, he had discreetly activated his Eye of Insight to assess the condition of the young man beside him.

Considering the value of a concentrated high-tier spirit stone within Qingyuan Empire, which clan could possibly give a

concentrated high-tier spirit stone to a profligate son to squander away? Furthermore, given the fact that he had achieved a cultivation of Saint 3-dan at such a young age, it was apparent that he wasn't an irrational individual who allowed lust to get the better of him.

It might sound ridiculous for a rational individual to pay such a hefty price just to watch a dance, but Chu gongzi's true goal was actually to resolve the flaws in his soul so as to advance his cultivation.

As long as the flaws in his soul remained, it would be nigh impossible for him to advance to Primordial Spirit realm.

It was precisely because Zhang Xuan had seen through it that he offered to dance for the other party.

Even though Fairy Ziyan was a 7-star terpsichore, in terms of her ability to heal souls, there was no way she could come close to matching up to Zhang Xuan.

If Chu gongzi had agreed to it, Zhang Xuan was confident that he would be able to nurse the other party's soul to perfection. However, it was a pity that the other party didn't treasure this opportunity.

"Opportunity? It's fine, I don't need it..." Chu gongzi quickly shook his head.

While the duo was chatting, the auction beneath concluded.

The value of a concentrated high-tier spirit stone was far above a thousand high-tier spirit stones, and not to mention, it was a commodity which was difficult to obtain in Qingyuan Empire even if one had the money for it. Inevitably, the slot went to Chu Xiang.

Shortly after the auction concluded, the room to the suite opened, and Fairy Ziyan, who had been dancing below earlier, slowly walked in.

At this point, she had already switched to another set of clothes.

It was less revealing than the one she had performed in earlier, but it still complemented her well nevertheless. With her new set of clothes, the aura of worldliness around her had vanished without a trace, and instead, she resembled a noble from a prestigious clan instead.

At close proximity, one could see that her skin was exquisitely delicate, reminiscent of silk. On top of that, the graceful aura which she exuded made one unwilling to avert one's eyes after taking a look.

"Ziyan pays respect to Chu gongzi." Ziyan greeted with a smile.

"You're too polite..." Chu gongzi hurriedly got to his feet before introducing, "This is my friend, Zhang Xuan, Zhang gongzi!"

"Pleased to meet you, Zhang gongzi." Ziyan bowed slightly.

Zhang Xuan nodded before asking, "Since you are a terpsichore of the local Terpsichore Guild, may I ask where should I go and whom I should approach in order to take the 7-star terpsichore examination?"

Since Fairy Ziyan was standing right before him at this moment, it was natural that he should make use of this opportunity to ask the matter.

"The 7-star terpsichore examination?" Surprised by the abrupt question, Ziyan took a look around the room before her gaze finally fell on Hu Yaoyao. "Is this young lady here going to take the examination?"

"No, it's me." Zhang Xuan replied.

"You?" Fairy Ziyan was visibly startled for a moment.

There was no explicit rule that prevented a male from learning terpsichorean arts, but conventionally, it had been regarded as a female occupation. This was the very first time she saw a male asking to challenge the terpsichore examination.

"That's right." Zhang Xuan nodded.

Under his guidance, Hu Yaoyao's proficiency as a terpsichore had advanced to the level of 6-star pinnacle. Nevertheless, she still needed more practice before she was ready to be promoted to 7-star.

Knowing what Fairy Ziyan was thinking of, Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist and took out his 6-star terpsichore emblem.

That was the emblem which Wei Ranxue had applied for him previously.

Taking a closer look at the emblem and confirming its authenticity, Fairy Ziyan turned to Zhang Xuan apologetically and said, "You are really a 6-star terpsichore! I'll bring you over right now then... Chu gongzi, pardon me, but I'll have to ask you to wait for me here for a moment. I'll be back after dealing with this matter to conduct an Exclusive Dance for you."

"It's fine." Chu gongzi nodded. "Actually, since I'm free at the moment, is it fine if I follow you all over as well?"

To be honest, he was rather surprised to learn that Zhang Xuan was actually a terpsichore too.

The seductive moves of a dancing man... Just the thought of it left him feeling a little agitated within...

"This..." Fairy Ziyan turned to Zhang Xuan to seek his opinion.

Typically speaking, the examination would be conducted in a private location so as to ensure confidentiality and absolute silence for the examiner to showcase the full extent of his abilities. Since Zhang Xuan was the one going to take the examination, it would only be right for her to seek his opinion on the matter.

"It's fine." Zhang Xuan nodded.

In the first place, terpsichorean art was a performance art meant for others to spectate. It mattered not to him whether he

performed before a crowd or not.

"Zhang gongzi, this way please!"

Knowing that the other party was here to challenge the 7-star examination, Fairy Ziyan's attitude became significantly more amiable. She began leading the way forward.

Stepping out of the grand hall, they arrived in a spacious room.

A middle-aged lady walked up to them and frowned, "Ziyan, why did you bring others in here?"

"Teacher, Zhang gongzi over here is a 6-star terpsichore. He intends to challenge the 7-star examination." After saying those words, Fairy Ziyan passed Zhang Xuan's 6-star terpsichore emblem over.

"Zhang gongzi?" Lowering her head to look at the emblem, a look of astonishment surfaced on the middle-aged lady's face. "You are Zhang Xuan, Zhang shi? From Hongyuan Empire?"

"Hm?" Zhang Xuan was perplexed to hear those words. "You know me?"

"I am Wei Ranqin. The head of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy Terpsichore School, Wei Ranxue, is my junior!" the middle-aged lady replied with a kind smile. "Not too long ago, she sent a message over and told me about your affairs. It's truly incredible for a man as young as you to achieve the level of Unadorned Quintessence in your terpsichorean art."

"I see." Zhang Xuan nodded in realization.

Wei Ranxue had never spoken about Wei Ranqin before, but given how the latter knew of his background, her words should be true as well.

"There's no need to stand on ceremony! Due to the considerations as a result of her identity as a master teacher, Junior Ranxue hasn't been able to release her inner self through her dance, resulting in

an awkward rigidity in her move. As a result, she has stagnated at 6-star pinnacle for a very long time. It's thanks to your guidance that she's able to take the final step forward and achieve the level of 7-star." Guild Leader Wei Ranqin said with a smile.

"She specially sent a message over saying that you might visit our guild in recent days, and she entrusted me to relay her gratitude to you if I were to meet you. Since you are intending to take the 7-star terpsichore examination, allow me to make preparations for you now." Guild Leader Wei Ranqin nodded.

"I'll be troubling you then." Zhang Xuan clasped his fist in response..

"It's no problem. It's also a good thing for us if more geniuses to emerge from our Terpsichore Guild." Wei Ranqin replied with a smile. After which, she turned around and instructed, "Ziyan, accompany Zhang shi here for a moment while I make some preparations for the examination!"

"Yes!"

After Wei Ranqin left, Fairy Ziyan and Chu gongzi couldn't help but reassess Zhang Xuan with a look of bewilderment on their faces.

To them, Guild Leader Wei was a nonchalant person who rarely showed her emotions. Power and prestige, these are things which didn't seem to affect her in the least. This was the very first time that Fairy Ziyan had seen her teacher getting so excited.

"Brother Zhang, you are really... a terpsichore?" Chu gongzi still found it difficult to believe the matter.

"That's right!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

"Aiya! How could I have been so dense..." Hearing Zhang Xuan acknowledge the matter, Chu gongzi slapped his forehead and exclaimed.

"What's wrong?" Zhang Xuan was bewildered by Chu gongzi's

abrupt words.

"If I were to become a terpsichore too, I would have more opportunities to come into close range with other terpsichores too. If so, I'll be able to watch as many dances as I want to without spending a single gold coin! More importantly... as the saying goes, those standing by the gazebo are the first to acquire the moon 1 . That must be the reason why Brother Zhang has three ravishing beauties following you. You are truly a winner in life, my idol!" Chu gongzi exclaimed with a look of deep regret on his face.

"How could I have been so foolish back then? If only I have insisted on learning terpsichorean arts back then, my life could have very well taken a wholly different trajectory!"

"..."Zhang Xuan was speechless.

Reluctant to bother himself with this fellow whose mind was filled with nothing but nonsense, Zhang Xuan turned to Fairy Ziyang and asked, "Pardon me, but I would like to ask how the 7-star terpsichore examination is conducted."

"You don't know?" Fairy Ziyang was taken aback.

To challenge the 7-star terpsichore examination despite not knowing what it was, the other party sure was gutsy!

"To be honest, I don't really know..." Zhang Xuan shook his head.

"The 7-star terpsichore examination doesn't differ much from the 6-star examination, so you need not worry too much about it." Shaking her head, Fairy Ziyang replied.

"Cough cough, then... may I ask how the 6-star examination is conducted?" Zhang Xuan scratched his head.

He hadn't taken the 6-star terpsichore examination either. The emblem he had was specially applied by Wei Ranxue. As such, he had no idea how the examination went either.

Hearing those words, Fairy Ziyang couldn't help but frown in

displeasure.

It is one thing for you to not know about the 7-star examination, but as a 6-star terpsichore, do you think that it makes sense for you not to know about the 6-star examination too? Aren't you clearly toying with me?

"To tell you the truth, I didn't take the 6-star terpsichore examination. My emblem was obtained by a special application from School Head Wei Ranxue, so I'm not very sure about the procedures for the 6-star examination either!" Seeing that the other party was mistaking his intentions, Zhang Xuan swiftly clarified.

"You obtained your emblem through a special application? How is that possible? How would others know how deep of an understanding you have in terpsichorean art without undergoing a formal examination? This is preposterous!" Fairy Ziyan flung her sleeves in displeasure.

Even if you wanted to boast, at least come up with something more believable!

While the Terpsichore Guild wasn't as strict and rigid as the Upper Nine Paths occupation, it was still a unique occupation. Every single examination needed to be invigilated by numerous elders of at least equal ranking, and only after receiving the approval of the majority would the individual be qualified to receive the emblem...

To be given the emblem without even undergoing the examination... You must be kidding me!

She had been considered as a once-in-a-century genius in terpsichorean arts, but even she had never encountered something as absurd as this!

"This..." Not expecting the other party to doubt him despite speaking of the truth, Zhang Xuan had no idea how he should

explain himself. Sighing deeply, he could only give up on the matter and relent, "Forget it then. May I know where your guild's library is? I would like to browse through the books if possible."

Since the other party was unwilling to speak, he would just have to uncover the answer himself through the books.

Besides, he had only compiled the 6-star Heaven's Path Terpsichorean Art so far. While his prowess was already on par with 7-star terpsichore, he would still have to compile the 7-star Heaven's Path Terpsichorean Art before he could be considered as a full-fledged 7-star terpsichore.

"Teacher will be turning very soon, so just wait here for a moment longer..." Fairy Ziyan waved her hands impatiently. However, before she could finish her words, Guild Leader Wen Ranqin suddenly returned back to the room with a bright smile on her face.

"Congratulations, Zhang shi. Junior Ranxue has reported your mastery in terpsichorean arts to the headquarters previously, and it has cleared their reviews. Thus, when I tried applying for the 7-star terpsichore examination on your behalf previously, the headquarters replied that they would bestow you with the 7-star emblem directly, so you don't have to take the examination anymore!" Wei Ranqin said as she passed an emblem over.

"Thank you for that!" Taking the emblem, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

"It's really possible to obtain the emblem without undergoing any examination?" Fairy Ziyan froze on the spot.

1. In this saying, gazebo refers to an elegant sheltered structure constructed above a pond, and the moon refers to the reflection on the surface of the water. This saying means those who are closest in proximity to an individual or a place tend to be the ones to gain the most from a happening.

Chapter 1144: News on Sun Qiang

It was just a moment ago that she said that it was ridiculous for one to obtain an emblem without any examination when her teacher delivered an emblem straight to the other party in the very next moment... If only there was a hole in the ground at this moment, she would burrow into it without any hesitation.

Too embarrassing! It was too embarrassing!

In the first place, it was rare for a male to learn terpsichorean arts, but not only was the young man before her a terpsichore, his emblems were even given straight to him by the Terpsichore Guild. Was this for real?

"Teacher, do the headquarters have a procedure to give out emblems straight? Why haven't I heard of it?" Unable to stand it any longer, Fairy Ziyan asked.

"The headquarters grant special care to those who have made great contribution to the terpsichore occupation, and this includes certain privileges in the promotion of ranks as well. Previously, Zhang shi has altered the Dance of the Rippling Cloud Robe, granting it prowess on par with a grade-7 terpsichorean art. With such contribution, putting aside a mere 7-star emblem, as long as Zhang shi wills for it, he can easily qualify as an elder of our branch!" Wei Ranqin replied.

"Altered the Dance of the Rippling Cloud Robe? He's the one who altered that terpsichorean art?" Fairy Ziyan's body trembled as disbelief sank into her eyes.

She had long heard of that someone had managed to improve the Dance of the Rippling Cloud Robe, and she was astonished by the significant rise in its prowess when she cultivated the altered version.

Not only was it far stronger than before, the soul energy required

for its execution was also reduced by at least two-thirds. With this, the technique had become far more practical in battle than before. At the very least, terpsichores wouldn't find themselves completely drained and powerless after executing this single technique.

It was in view of the astonishing prowess of the altered Dance of the Rippling Cloud Robe that nearly all 6-star terpsichores and above in their guild had cultivated this terpsichorean art. She had thought that the person behind the alteration would at least be an 8-star terpsichore at the very minimum. Who could have thought that the person would actually be a twenty-year-old young man?

More importantly, she had even mocked the other party just a moment ago...

"Un. Not only did Zhang shi alter the Dance of the Rippling Cloud Robe, he also has a unique insight into the essence of terpsichorean arts. Your Senior Aunt Ranxue has reported all of these in detail to the Terpsichore Guild, and it's in view of those that the headquarter made a special exception and distributed the 7-star emblem to him straight." Guild Leader Wei Ranqin explained.

Even though she had learned of the matter from her junior through the conversations that they had a while ago, she still couldn't help but find the entire matter inconceivable, especially after seeing how young Zhang Xuan was in person.

It was one thing for him to have such a deep understanding of terpsichore despite his young age, but more than that, he had also shown outstanding accomplishments in the other occupations as well... Even she couldn't help but feel deep admiration for the other party.

"This..." Fairy Ziyan's face turned completely scarlet from embarrassment. Biting her lips, she stepped forward and bowed apologetically, "Zhang shi, I apologize for my previous rudeness. I hope that you can forgive my ignorance."

"It's fine, I won't take it to heart, so you don't have to worry

about it." Zhang Xuan waved his hands and smiled. "If you still feel bad about the matter, it'll do as long as you help my brother over here resolve the issues with his soul during the Exclusive Dance with him later on."

With his current state of mind, the views of others couldn't faze him anymore. Honestly, it didn't really matter to him whether Fairy Ziyan apologized or not.

"Thank you." Seeing that the other party didn't blame him for this matter, Fairy Ziyan bowed gratefully. After which, she turned her gaze towards Chu Gongzi to ask the latter what kind of flaws his soul had, only to see the latter staring at Zhang Xuan with an astonished look on his face.

"Y-you... You know about the injuries of my soul?"

He hadn't told anyone about the injuries of his soul for fear that his enemies would use it against him. As such, not even his father was aware of the matter. All along, he had been hiding it under the cover as a profligate individual, and yet, a person whom he had just met an hour ago pointed it out so easily, as if it was nothing at all...

"While your soul may seem compact, there are still some portions which aren't fusing well with the rest of your soul. If I'm not mistaken, it's probably the result from being assaulted by an enemy while you were in the midst of a breakthrough to the Embryonic Soul realm!" Zhang Xuan said with a smile.

With the increment in the prowess of his Eye of Insight, even if Zhang Xuan didn't use the Library of Heaven's Path, he could still easily see what was wrong with the latter.

The other party's soul had been damaged due to being assaulted by an enemy during a crucial stage in a breakthrough, but fortunately, the injuries he had sustained didn't seem to be too severe. Furthermore, it seemed like he had been visiting the Spring Pavilion regularly to nourish his soul through terpsichorean arts,

and he was just a little short form making a complete recovery.

As long as Fairy Ziyan were to earnestly help him resolve his issue, he should be able to make a full recovery very soon after watching a few more terpsichorean arts.

Thus, while the process might be a little slower then, there was actually no need for Zhang Xuan to make a move.

Even though Chu gongzi had only buddied up to him thinking that he was a fellow 'comrade' treading down the same path, ultimately, it was still thanks to the other party that he was able to enter the Spring Pavilion and meet Guild Leader Wei Ranqin so easily.

Naturally, it would only be right for him to return the favor, especially since it was only a trivial matter.

"I..." Chu gongzi's face turned scarlet. He couldn't find any words to speak at this moment.

It was true that his injuries were caused from being assaulted by an enemy in the midst of his breakthrough to Embryonic Soul realm.

However, as this matter concerned a very huge secret, he dared not speak of it to another soul.

Yet, the young man before him was able to see through him so easily, even accurately determining the cause of his injury... The other party's eye of discernment was truly, in every sense of the word, astounding!

He had thought that the other party was only a lecherous fellow, but who could have thought that he would actually be a hidden expert!

"Guild Leader Wei, is it fine if I browse through the 7-star terpsichore books in your library?" Having dealt with the matter over here, Zhang Xuan turned to Wei Ranqin and clasped his fist.

"As a 7-star terpsichore, you are definitely qualified to browse through our 7-star terpsichore books. This way please!" Wei Ranqin nodded before leading the way forward.

Following behind her, it didn't take long for them to arrive in a vast room.

"All of the books of our Terpsichore Guild is in there. As long as you have the required emblem on hand, you will be able to enter and leave the premises freely." Wei Ranqin said as she gestured forward.

"Un. I'll be troubling Guild Leader Wei to take care of my three friends over here then. This young lady over here is Hu Yaoyao, and she's the prodigious disciple of School Head Wei!" Zhang Xuan nodded as he gestured to the three ladies behind him.

"Junior Ranxue's disciple?" Guild Leader Wei was surprised as she turned her gaze over to Hu Yaoyao.

"Yaoyao pays respect to Senior Aunt!" Hu Yaoyao quickly stepped forward and bowed politely.

"Un. Not bad, not bad..." With a look, Guild Leader Wei couldn't help but nod in approval.

On top of their innate talent, terpsichores rely heavily on their external appearances as well.

The more beautiful a terpsichore was, the more likely she would be able to bring forth greater prowess from terpsichorean arts. Regardless of whether it was her figure or her appearance, it was apparent that Hu Yaoyao's looks were far above that of Fairy Ziyang. As long as she had a good teacher to guide her along, she would be bound to achieve great things in the future.

Guild Leader Wei nodded in satisfaction. Seeing this, Zhang Xuan decided to speak no longer, and taking out his emblem, he entered the library.

The library was extremely vast. Countless books were stacked

compactly in neatly-positioned shelves, which seemed to extend all the way to the horizon.

Without bothering himself with the 1-star to 6-star books, Zhang Xuan headed straight towards the section with 7-star terpsichore books and began scanning through them with his gaze.

Hualala!

Countless books materialized in the Library of Heaven's Path.

After undergoing the fourth acknowledgement of Celestial Master Teacher, while the Library of Heaven's Path didn't undergo any changes, Zhang Xuan's ability to process things did rise significantly. As such, the rate at which he could collect books was also raised considerably.

It took him less than an hour to collect all of the 7-star terpsichore books into the Library of Heaven's Path.

"Compile!" With a thought, Zhang Xuan gathered all of the books together and formed the 7-star Heaven's Path Terpsichorean Art.

Another hour later, he exhaled deeply, and a brilliant gleam shone from his eyes.

Having grasped the 7-star Heaven's Path Terpsichorean Art, his mastery as a terpsichore had risen to the level of a 7-star pinnacle terpsichore. Due to the overwhelming prowess of the Heaven's Path Terpsichorean Art, his skills could be said to be comparable to most 8-star primary terpsichores.

But of course, that was only in terms of knowledge and mastery. With his current Saint 2-dan pinnacle cultivation, if he were to meet a real 8-star terpsichore, he would do well to flee as fast as he could.

As long as his cultivation hadn't met the mark, he wouldn't be able to display the full prowess of his terpsichorean arts.

"Alright, another supporting occupation cleared. Two more left

to go, and I'll be able to be promoted to 7-star master teacher!" Standing up and stretching his back, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

"Perhaps I should try the Appraiser Hall and the Painter Guild. The examinations of those two occupations are slightly simpler." Zhang Xuan thought with a smile.

The Beast Tamer Guild was a considerable distance away, and considering that it was an Upper Nine Paths occupation, its examination was likely to be more rigid and rigorous, thus more time-consuming as well. Since that was the case, it would be better for him to drop by the Appraiser Hall and the Painter Guild to take a look.

Walking out of the library, Zhang Xuan saw that Guild Leader Wei and the others were still standing around the area. Thus, he walked up to them and said, "I have truly imposed on Guild Leader Wei this time around. I still have matters to attend to, so I'm afraid that I'll have to take my leave first."

"Guild Leader Wei, we'll be taking our leave too." Seeing that Zhang Xuan was about to leave, Luo Qiqi and Yu Fei-er clasped their fists as well.

"Un." Guild Leader Wei nodded. "I'll keep Yaoyao here with me for the time being. There are some things which I would like to ask her."

Zhang Xuan took a look at Hu Yaoyao to seek her opinion on the matter, and only after seeing the latter nod did he reply, "Alright."

"Zhang shi, are we returning back to the Combat Master Hall?" Leaving the Terpsichore Guild, Yu Fei-er turned to Zhang Xuan and asked.

"I'm intending to drop by the Appraiser Hall. If you have things to attend to, feel free to leave." Zhang Xuan said.

"I-It's fine, I'll head there with you!" Yu Fei-er replied swiftly.

"Same here too..." Luo Qiqi nodded.

Seeing that the duo was determined to continue tagging along with him, Zhang Xuan decided to say no more. After determining the direction of the Appraiser Hall based on the description Hall Master Xing provided him, he was just about to head over when a young man dressed in black suddenly approached him.

"May I ask if you are Zhang Xuan, Zhang shi?" the young man clasped his fist and asked.

"I am." Zhang Xuan replied with a frown.

He hardly knew anyone in Qingyuan Empire, so why would anyone seek him?

"Our Old Master wants to meet you." the young man said.

"Your Old Master wants to meet me?" Zhang Xuan was perplexed. "Who is your Old Master?"

"You will know once you meet him." the young man replied nonchalantly.

"Pardon me, I'm not free." Zhang Xuan waved his hand and turned the other party down.

He was currently busy at the moment, so why should he waste his time on someone who wasn't even willing to report his own name?

"Hehe, our Old Master said that Zhang shi will dare not turn down his invitation." A peculiar smile appeared on the young man's face, seemingly suggesting that he might have already anticipated such an outcome.

"Oh? I dare not turn down his invitation?" Zhang Xuan scoffed in displeasure.

It was one thing for the other party to not report his name despite requesting to meet with him, but to utter such conceited words on top of that... It was apparent from this that the other

party couldn't possibly be an upright individual!

"Zhang shi, why don't you take a look at this before making your decision?"

The young man flicked his wrist and passed an item over.

Perplexed, Zhang Xuan took a look at it.

It was the tattered fabric of a robe.

With just one look, Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes menacingly, "You kidnapped Sun Qiang?"

He was certain that the fabric had come from Sun Qiang's clothes.

He hadn't paid any heed to Sun Qiang's disappearance, thinking that the latter was out feasting, drinking, and saving damsels in distress, enjoying his life to the fullest... He didn't think that the latter would actually be captured by someone else!

More importantly, it was apparent that the other party knew who he was, but despite so, the other party still chose to resort to such a brazen and arrogant course of action.

"We are currently hosting Butler Sun in our manor as a guest. Our Old Master has entrusted me to bring Zhang shi over at all cost, or else what that would be sent over next might not just be a simple piece of fabric anymore but..." Seeing that Zhang shi recognized the object, the young man smiled gleefully. However, before he could finish his words, a sharp pain assaulted his abdomen, causing his face to distort hideously.

Peng!

Zhang Xuan's powerful kick had left the young man's organs jolting under the powerful impact. If the slightest bit more force were to be exerted, the other party's organs might just end up being shattered on the spot.

Padah!

The young man flew several dozen meters across the street before skidding to a halt. Clutching his abdomen, his entire body was scrunched together like a shrimp from the excruciating pain.

Chapter 1145: Landscaper

As a transcender, Zhang Xuan had grown up being inculcated by the positive values of his previous world. As such, he preferred to avoid confrontation, choosing to resolve all problem amiably wherever possible.

But... all dragons had scales which couldn't be touched, and those who flout the rules would have to pay with their lives!

(This is saying from a legend which depicts that dragons have an inverted scale on their neck which no one is to touch. Anyone who dares to touch it will be killed by the dragon. This saying means that everyone has their own bottom line, no matter how tolerant or forgiving they are. Anyone who dares cross that line will incur the ire of the individual)

Sun Qiang had been with him ever since the time he was at Tianxuan Kingdom. Despite the other party's indolence when it came to cultivation, the other party had always dealt with all kinds of miscellaneous matters for him skillfully without a single word of complaint. If not for the other party, he would probably have been bogged down by all sorts of things, and there was no way he would have been able to devote his attention to cultivation and achieve so much within such a short period of time.

It could be said that Butler Sun was one of the most important people in his life, and he viewed him as a family member as well, just like Wang Ying, Zhao Ya, and the others.

Yet, the fellow before him actually dared to threaten him using Sun Qiang's life, so how could he possibly not fly into a rage?

"You dare to kick me?" Not expecting that the other party would dare to make a move on him even when they had a hostage in hand, the black-robed young man struggled weakly to his feet and glared at Zhang Xuan with eyes brimming with hostility.

"I want you to di—" Roaring furiously, the young man charged forward, but before he could finish his words, he suddenly felt his entirely body tensing up. Someone had grabbed him by his neck and pulled him up.

Following which, a pair of frosty eyes appeared before him.

"If you want to die, I can fulfill your wish right now."

The frosty voice paired with the killing intent left the black-robed young man paling in fear. The words which he had wanted to speak stifled in his mouth, rendering him incapable of utter anything at all.

Having undergone life and death situations before, the black-robed young man could tell that the other party was deadly serious about this matter. If he were to dare speak another word of the matter, the other party would very well have him killed.

"Who is your Old Master, and where is Sun Qiang at the moment?" Zhang Xuan uttered frostily.

"I..." The black-robed young man shuddered upon hearing those words completely devoid of warmth. Fearing for his life, he quickly replied, "O-our Old Master is the First King of the Qingyuan Empire, King Zhongqing!"

"King Zhongqing?" Zhang Xuan frowned. "Why did he kidnap my butler?"

It had only been three days since he arrived at Qingyuan City, and his activities had been mainly centered around the Spirit Awakener Guild, Combat Master Hall, and Terpsichore Guild.

He had never been anywhere else other than those three places, so how in the world did he manage to offend the so-called First King of Qingyuan Empire?

If he hadn't offended the other party, he couldn't think of a reason why the other party would go to the extent of provoking a reputable master teacher like himself!

To kidnap his men without any warning was as good as challenging his dignity, and not to mention, the other party even sent a small fry over to threaten him... He must be really tired of living!

"I am just a servant, I really don't know anything else!" the black-robed man shuddered.

"Lead the way!" Seeing that the other party earnestly didn't know anything at all, Zhang Xuan dropped the young man on the ground and bellowed.

"Yes!" the black-robed man replied fearfully. He dared not pull his weight as he did previously anymore, and he quickly headed forward.

"Zhang shi, I have heard of King Zhongqing before. He's not an easy figure to deal with, you must be absolutely careful around him!" While following behind the black-robed young man, Yu Fei-er warned with a deep frown.

Even though she wasn't interested in politics, as a princess of Hongyuan Empire, she still knew a thing or two about Qingyuan Empire.

"Oh?" Seeing that Yu Fei-er knew about King Zhongqing, Zhang Xuan immediately turned his gaze to her.

"This First King of Qingyuan Empire used to be a humble peasant, but twenty years ago, the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe somehow managed to find a way to arrive at the Master Teacher Continent, and they planned launch an invasion. The Qingyuan Empire Master Teacher Pavilion, Combat Master Hall, and royal family swiftly learned of the matter and dispatched their men to eradicate the Otherworldly Demons. It was an extremely bitter fight; the three powers suffered great losses, and the head of the Combat Master Hall, Hall Master Xing, even suffered grievous wounds in the fight and nearly lost his life."

"Back then, the emperor of Qingyuan Empire, Chu Tianxing, personally led the forces of the Qingyuan royal family into the fight, but a sudden ambush by the Otherworldly Demons left him in a truly dangerous position. At that desperate situation, King Zhongqing suddenly appeared and massacred the Otherworldly Demons, saving Emperor Chu Tianxing from that seemingly hopeless situation. After that incident, he continued to accrue merit after merit, and within just a short twenty years, he managed to rise from a mere peasant into a conferred king. In the entire Qingyuan Empire, he's definitely the number one figure of the external kings!" Yu Fei-er explained. (King is a title usually granted to close relatives of the royal family, such as fellow brothers or sons of the current emperor. However, if one were to accrue sufficient merit, it's possible to be conferred as a King, and such Kings are called 'different surname Kings', or as I translated it, external Kings.)

"The Otherworldly Demonic Tribe attempted to invade Qingyuan Empire?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

Thinking back, the wound on Hall Master Xing's Primordial Spirit was indeed left behind in a fight roughly twenty years back too. The was in line with the details of the story.

"Emperor Chu Tianxing is bound to be protected by countless experts, and he probably is a powerful cultivator himself too... If the Otherworldly Demons were able to corner him that far, just how powerful must King Zhongqing be to be able to break him out from that desperate situation?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

Even Hall Master Xing had nearly succumbed to the Otherworldly Demons and lost his life, so how did a humble fellow managed to break Emperor Chu Tianxing out from the encirclement of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe?

"I'm not too sure about the details... Wait, I seem to recall my father discussing this matter with another person before. If I recall correctly, King Zhongqing used... poison!" Yu Fei-er exclaimed.

"Poison?" Zhang Xuan frowned. "Is King Zhongqing a poison master?"

If King Zhongqing was truly a poison master, then it might really be possible for him to pull such a matter off.

The reason why poison masters were so deeply feared was because of their ability to fend against multiple enemies simultaneously. As long as they were to play their cards right, they could easily eradicate a group of experts with their poison.

Just take the Ten Kings of the Qingtian Lineage for example; back then, he was only at Nascent Saint pinnacle, and any one of them could have easily killed him in a direct battle. Yet, nearly all of them ended up dying from the poison within his Heaven's Path zhenqi anyway.

"I'm not too sure whether he is a poison master or not, but there is one thing particularly sinister regarding him. It's uncommon for an individual outside of the royal family to be conferred a King, so naturally, there were many influential officials who opposed King Zhongqing. Yet, over the past twenty years, they had either disappeared or died... As such, King Zhongqing currently wields immense influence in the royal court. Furthermore, due to his merit of having saved Emperor Chu Tianxing, he is well-favored, and there's no longer anyone who dares to confront him directly in Qingyuan Empire anymore!" Yu Fei-er said.

Zhang Xuan nodded as the frown on his forehead deepened.

Putting aside whether that fellow was truly a poison master or not, the fact still stood that he wasn't acquainted with the other party. It simply didn't make sense for the other party to kidnap Sun Qiang.

"Considering that he has gone to the extent of kidnapping Sun Qiang, it goes to say that he has absolutely no fear of my identity as a 6-star master teacher and the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy. It would be best for you two to stay out of this

matter. I'll deal with this alone." Zhang Xuan paused for a moment before saying.

Regardless of what the other party was up to, it was clear that the other party was aiming right for him. Since that was the case, there was no need for these two to bear this risk along with him.

"Zhang shi, you are my teacher. As your student, how can I flee and leave to face danger by yourself? I would be unworthy of being a master teacher if I were to do so!" Luo Qiqi stepped forward and spoke determinedly.

She was Zhang Xuan's apothecary and blacksmith teacher. While she wasn't his direct disciple, and they had never officially acknowledged their relationship, there were still the bonds between a teacher and student between them.

"I won't leave either! I'm willing to brave through any danger with you!" Yu Fei-er looked straight into Zhang Xuan's eyes and said.

"This..."

Seeing that the wills of the duo were unwavering, Zhang Xuan shook his head and whipped out two pills from his storage ring. "These pills are antidotes which I have personally forged, and they are capable of resolving most poisons. If you are intent on tagging along, consume one first. This way, you shouldn't be in any danger even if King Zhongqing is really a poison master."

The antidote which Zhang Xuan spoke of was just an ordinary pill, but it was infused with his Heaven's Path zhenqi.

"Un." The duo knew that Zhang Xuan wouldn't allow them to follow him if they were to refuse, so they swallowed the pill without any hesitation.

"Alright, let's go!"

All this while, they had been conversing through zhenqi telepathy, so it didn't affect their movement. Following behind the

black-robed young man, it didn't take long before a massive manor appeared before their eyes.

The manor was truly huge. While it couldn't be compared with behemoths like the Combat Master Hall, it was definitely one of the largest and grandest manor in Qingyuan City. The interior of the manor was filled with all kinds of formations, and even before coming close to it, one could feel the surrounding spiritual energy gravitating towards the manor. Without a doubt, the manor was definitely a top-notch land for cultivation.

Even ordinary men would find their lifespan lengthening by living in such an environment.

"This is the manor of our Old Master." the black-robed man said before walking forward to discreetly whisper some things to the guard standing by the door. The guard glared at Zhang Xuan and the others for a moment before heading in.

Not too long later, the guard returned and gestured with a nod.

"This way please!" the black-robed man gestured forward politely. A vicious glint flickered swiftly across his eyes as he turned his head to lead the way into the manor.

Zhang Xuan noticed it, but he decided to feign ignorance. With Yu Fei-er and Luo Qiqi following behind him, he headed into the manor as well.

As expected of the manor of the number one King of a Conferred Empire, it was far grander than the royal palace of Hongyuan Empire. Even its pavements were crafted out of valuable ores. Every single part of the manor screamed of extravagance.

"On top of powerful formations, it seems the entire manor has been specially designed by a landscaper." Shortly after entering the manor, Luo Qiqi remarked.

"Landscaper?" This was the first time Zhang Xuan was hearing of this name.

"Un. Just like spirit awakener and herbologist, landscaper isn't considered to be a unique occupation either. However, due to the unique capabilities that landscapers possess, they are still deeply welcomed by influential powers and clans as honorary guests." Luo Qiqi said.

"Oh? Are there landscapers in Hongyuan Empire?" Zhang Xuan turned to look at Yu Fei-er curiously.

"I haven't heard of such an occupation before..." Yu Fei-er shook her head.

"I learned of the existence of this occupation from an ancient record." Luo Qiqi replied with a smile. "It's said that landscapers are able to assess the geographical terrain, geomancy, and many other factors of the environment to design structures, be it residences, sects, formations, or mechanisms, and fuse them perfectly together, such that they complemented one another to exert the maximum strength possible. If a power were to have its base designed by a landscaper, its overall defenses could potentially be enhanced by severalfold!"

"But of course, it is an extremely rare occupation, and it doesn't have a complete heritage either, so I can't be too sure about the matter. It's in view to the exquisite layout of the manor and the perfect harmony of the various structures and formations that I made such a deduction."

"You're right, the harmony of the various structures within this manor is indeed exquisite." Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement.

As a 7-star pinnacle formation master and a possessor of the Eye of Insight, it went without saying that he would be able to easily notice what Luo Qiqi saw.

He had been to Hongyuan royal palace, and as numerous as the formations there were, they were all separate entities from one another. Each formation had to be manually triggered in order to come to life. On the other hand, the formations within King

Zhongqing Manor were interconnected with one another, as well as the structures in the area. If they were to just trigger a single formation, they might find other formations coming to life as well, swiftly cornering them.

If the formations within Hongyuan empire were said to be mouse traps, effective only when in contact, the formations within King Zhongqing Manor were most definitely dominoes. Touch a single one of them, and it could cause a chain reaction with devastating outcomes.

What Luo Qiqi had said could very well be true, the manor had been worked on by landscapers.

Just as Zhang Xuan was still in the midst of contemplating over the matter, a bunch of footsteps suddenly sounded right in front of the black-robed young man. Following which, dozens of guards abruptly rushed out.

In the blink of an eye, they had the trio tightly encircled.

"Brat, you sure acted arrogantly a moment ago. Give him a good beating! Let him know that we from the King Zhongqing Manor are not to be trifled with!" the black-robed young man sneered savagely as he hid behind the crowd.

When he heard that he had to 'invite' the other party here, he thought that it would be an easy assignment. He had never thought that he would be nearly kicked to death. From that point onward, he was filled with nothing but utmost antagonism for the young man before him. Thus, back when he was still at the doorstep, he secretly informed the guard to prepare an ambush.

Huala!

Upon hearing those words, the guards began walking forward as they brandished the sharp weapons in their hands threateningly. Their movements seemed to be aligned with the surrounding formations, causing an overwhelming pressure to fall upon Zhang

Xuan and the others.

Chapter 1146: King Zhongqing

"Teacher..." Luo Qiqi's face warped in shock, and she hurriedly stood in front of Zhang Xuan to shield him.

Individually, these Half-Saint guards were no threat at all. However, when their prowess was enhanced by the surrounding formations and the perfect harmony crafted by a landscaper, the nature of the matter became completely different.

Even a Saint 3-dan expert would find it difficult to flee from their combined might!

"There's no need to panic." Seeing the anxious state the young lady was in, Zhang Xuan pulled her behind him before turning to the black-robed young man. His lips curled up as he asked, "You wish to teach me a lesson?"

"Considering that our Old Master has specially invited you over, I'll allow you to keep your life for the time being. However, you won't be getting away from here without suffering some pain!" the black-robed young man sneered.

The Old Master had said that if the other party refused to heed his words, he had his permission to teach the other party a lesson, there was no need to hold back just because the other party was a master teacher. It was for this reason that he dared to pull a thing such as this on Zhang Xuan.

"Pain?" Zhang Xuan shook his head and sighed deeply. "I was considering whether I should let you off with just a kick, but it seems like you just won't learn... It seems like there's no need for me to hold back anymore then!"

Right after saying those words, Zhang Xuan snapped his fingers.

Pah!

A crisp sound echoed resoundingly through the manor. Initially, the black-robed young man thought that Zhang Xuan was just

feigning calm, but in the next moment, he suddenly felt excruciating pain assaulting every single part of his body.

Pu!

A mouthful of blood spewed from his mouth, and in an instant, his face flushed completely pale. He turned to face Zhang Xuan with a look of horror.

"Y-you... you poisoned me?"

The answer was already apparent at this point, but what was truly fearsome was that he couldn't even fathom when the other party had poisoned him!

With his body twitching from pain, the black-robed young man hurriedly whipped out two antidotes from his storage ring and swallowed it. However, the antidotes only seemed to have further worsened his pain. Cold sweat gushed down his head, and he felt as if he would simply cave in to the pain at any moment.

"Poison? When did you see me poison you? If I were to say, you probably just ate something unclean! However, worry not. I am a capable physician, so why don't you allow me to treat you instead?" Zhang Xuan waved his hand leisurely as he said.

Naturally, as a master teacher, he couldn't possibly admit to being a poison master.

"You..." Veins popped out on the temples of the black-robed young man as he clenched his jaws so forcefully that it seemed like his teeth would chip. He was tempted to make a move and end the life of the young man before him there and then, but eventually, he clenched his fists tightly and spat, "Let them pass!"

He had wanted to teach the other party a lesson, but at this point, the tides were no longer in his favor anymore. As indignant as he was, he could only let this matter go.

"Yes!"

The guards quickly split apart to open up a road for Zhang Xuan and the others to pass.

With a smile, Zhang Xuan stepped forward, and just as he was about to walk by the black-robed young man, he placed his mouth before the other party's ear and whispered in a silent tone that only the latter could hear. "The only way to alleviate my poison is to have your face slapped viciously. Otherwise, the pain will gradually intensify until it reaches a point where you can't bear it any longer and snap!"

The black-robed young man was startled for a moment before he regained himself and sneered, "The only way to alleviate the poison is to have my face slapped? Hah, do you take me for a fool? How can there be such a poison in the world?"

"You're right, I'm just fooling around with you. I'll be going ahead first, so have fun!" Not bothering to explain anything, Zhang Xuan left with the two ladies.

"You..."

The black-robed young man thought that Zhang Xuan would at least attempt to justify his words, but who could have thought that the latter would admit to lying to him so blatantly and shamelessly? This unexpected response left him stunned instead.

Just as he was at a loss of what to do, his body suddenly churned up once more, and he felt as if his organs were being gradually corroded by sulfur.

Pu!

Yet another mouthful of blood spewed from his mouth.

At this rate, I could really die! It felt as if his life force was gradually being sapped from his body, and this made him realize that he was at an imminent threat of death. Cold sweat immediately flowed down his back. Desperate, he turned to a nearby guard and ordered, "You, come over here. I want you to

slap my face!"

"S-s-slap your face? Butler Qin, I dare not to!" The guard was horrified to hear such words, and he quickly lowered his head humbly and responded.

"Hurry up, do it!" The face of the black-robed man distorted hideously from the excruciating pain.

At this point, he had no other choice. He wasn't prepared to face death yet, so he could only heed whatever the other party told him, even though there was a good chance that it was a lie.

"This..."

No one had heard his conversation with Zhang Xuan, so everyone was taken aback by Butler Qin's abrupt request. No one here could have imagined that Butler Qin would actually have masochistic tendencies... Appalled and speechless, they stared at one another, not knowing what to do.

"Hurry up and do it, or else I'll have every single one of you killed!" Seeing that none of the guards were making a move, Butler Qin roared furiously.

"Yes!" A guard stepped forward, and gritting his teeth in resolution, he raised his hand and slapped Butler Qin's face forcefully.

Pah!

Butler Qin's face immediately swelled up.

"Hm?" While there was burning sensation on his face, the excruciating pain within his body seemed to have lessened considerably.

Could it be that the other party isn't lying? There's truly such a poison in the world? Butler Qin was thought in astonishment as he bellowed, "Continue hitting me, don't stop!"

"Yes!"

Fearing that Butler Qin would really claim their lives, the guard could only continue striking with all his might.

Pah pah pah pah!

With just a few slaps, Butler Qin's face had already swollen to a point where it bore no resemblance to how it was previously. However, it did seem like the poison within his body had alleviated significantly. The excruciating pain from before was no longer as unbearable anymore.

"It really is effectively!" Enduring the stinging pain on his cheeks, Butler Qin heaved a sigh of relief.

It was rather embarrassing to be slapped by others, especially before such a crowd, but his fear of death had surpassed all of his other emotions.

He had the guard slap him a few more dozen times, and after confirming that he was fine, he stood up once more. Hatred and hostility began welling up in the depths of his eyes once more.

"Damn that fellow, how dare he humiliate me with such a poison? I hereby vow that I'll surely return this favor to him tenfold, or else I shall renounce my humanity!" Butler Qin clenched his jaws furiously.

As the loyal follower of the powerful King Zhongqing, the butler of the massive residence, when had he suffered such grievance before?

"Let it be clear that if I were to hear a single word about this matter anywhere else, I'll have all of your tongues severed!" Butler Qin turned to the guard and harrumphed coldly.

"Y-yes, we won't speak of this matter to another soul..." the guards quickly lowered their heads subserviently and replied.

'Un.' Harrumphing coldly, Butler Qin hurriedly walked down the path where Zhang Xuan had headed to previously.

...

"Zhang shi, that fellow won't let this matter rest just like that. Are you really going to let him off like this?" Walking closely behind Zhang Xuan, Yu Fei-er couldn't help but ask worriedly.

While Zhang Xuan may seem like a leisurely and easygoing person most of the time, he wasn't the type to show mercy to those who had crossed him. Back then, she had crossed him too, and he forced her into becoming his maid through trickery. That matter had truly left her fuming mad for a very long time.

It was apparent with a look that the black-robed young man was a vicious character, and to such a person go after a complete fallout... This truly wasn't Zhang Xuan's style.

"To dare to confront the principal of a Master Teacher Academy head-on, a 6-star pinnacle master teacher, there's no doubt that King Zhongqing must have prepared a foolproof plan. At this point, it might play to our advantage to spare that fellow, at least for now..." Zhang Xuan replied Yu Fei-er telepathically.

If it had been on any other occasion, even if he didn't kill that fellow, he would make sure to pummel him to the point where even limping was impossible. However, with Sun Qiang in the other party's hands, it was best for him to proceed carefully for the time being.

There was only one path that led to the main hall, so it didn't matter whether there was anyone bringing him along. Very soon, they arrived at their destination.

A hall that towered several dozen meters high had four thick and bulky pillars supporting its entrance. Each of these pillars was at least three meters big, and from afar, the grandeur was truly impressive.

'You must be Zhang shi. Our Old Master has been waiting inside for you for some time now...' A guard stepped forward and

ushered Zhang Xuan in.

Nodding, the trio made their way into the hall.

The hall was exceptionally spacious, stretching for more than a thousand square meters large. The ceiling was embedded with Night Illumination Pearls of all sizes, bringing radiance to the insides of the hall.

Seated on the main seat in the room was a middle-aged man with tanned skin and eagle-like eyes. Even without coming close, one could already feel the aura of authority and bloodshed that he emanated. It was clear that he was a powerful man no stranger to slaughter.

Without a doubt, he was the famous King Zhongqing!

Not too far away from King Zhongqing sat an elder, who seemed to be in his sixties. The elder wasn't too tall, and he was a little hunched over even. However, his presence felt similar to a silent, unmoving painting. If one didn't see him with one's physical eyes, one might not even be able to. However, the aura that he emanated felt tranquil like a painting, completely

King Zhongqing is a Primordial Spirit realm pinnacle expert, and the hunched over elder... seems to be even stronger than him! In the blink of an eye, Zhang Xuan managed to assess his current situation.

King Zhongqing's aura felt condensed and powerful, and it was imbued with overwhelming killing intent at that. However, in terms of scariness, the hunched back elder was definitely an individual whom Zhang Xuan had to guard carefully against.

Even though he didn't use his Eye of Insight to assess the other party's strength yet, the fact that the other party was able to conceal his breath so perfectly indicated that his fighting prowess had already reached an incredible level. Most likely, the other party was even stronger than Wu Shi, even after the latter's

breakthrough in the Qiu Wu Palace.

"You are Zhang Xuan, Zhang shi?"

While he was assessing the other party, the other party was also assessing him. When the trio finally reached the center of the hall, King Zhongqing turned to look at him with a frown.

"That's right!" Zhang Xuan nodded as he walked up to a guest seat by the side and sat down.

Even though the other party wielded great authority in his hands, Zhang Xuan didn't pale in comparison either, so there was no need for him to fear.

It was one thing if the other party didn't provoke him, but if the other party didn't know what was better for him, he didn't mind flipping the entire Qingyuan City upside down!

To be honest, they should already be counting their blessing that he hadn't gone around causing trouble. To actually attempt to provoke him... they are truly courting death!

"Did I give you permission to sit?" King Zhongqing uttered with a cold, authoritative voice. His powerful presence swept across the room, commanding others to obey him.

"I am a 6-star pinnacle master teacher, as well as a principal of a Master Teacher Academy. In terms of standing, I am on par with any 7-star master teacher. Not even your emperor is worthy of dictating where and when I should sit, so who do you think you are?" Zhang Xuan raised his eyelid and glanced at King Zhongqing coldly.

Upon hearing those words, Yu Fei-er and Luo Qiqi's face twitched as cold sweat filled their palms.

To act so brazenly despite being within the other party's brazenly, even going to the extent of criticizing the other party... Wasn't Zhang shi a little too gutsy?

However, master teachers also had their own dignity to uphold. If Zhang Shi couldn't even stand his own ground after what the other party had done, how could he stand before his students and lecture others?

"6-star pinnacle master teacher? Hmph, you still dare to say that you are a master teacher? Flouting the rules of the Master Teacher Pavilion, colluding with the poison masters of the Poison Hall... Do you honestly think that no one will know of these, principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy?" King Zhongqing harrumphed coldly.

"Colluding with the poison masters?" Zhang Xuan glanced at King Zhongqing and sneered, "Watch your words, King Zhongqing. You should know the consequences of slandering a master teacher."

Master teachers mustn't be sullied.

Slandering a master teacher was an extremely grievous crime. Even if the other party was the number one King of the Qingyuan Empire, he could still be beheaded on the spot over this matter.

"Slander? It seems like you simply won't concede until you see your own coffin!" King Zhongqing said as he raised his hand.

Huala!

The sounds of rattling chain echoed in the room, and a plump figure was dragged into the room.

"Young Master!" Upon seeing Zhang Xuan, the plump figure immediately shouted. However, despite shouting with all of his might, his voice sounded feeble and powerless.

Sun Qiang.

Upon seeing the state that Sun Qiang was in, Zhang Xuan's face turned livid.

There was not a single part of Sun Qiang which could be said to

be in good shape. It was apparent that he had been severely tortured. There were even two Golden Soul Lock piercing through his chest, preventing him from exerting any strength at all.

"What do you mean by this?" Zhang Xuan turned to look at King Zhongqing with narrowed eyes.

Chapter 1147: Tian Qing

He knew that the King Zhongqing wanted to deal with him, but he hadn't thought that the other party would be so vicious as to inflict such grievous torture on Sun Qiang.

As the saying goes, even when beating a dog must one look at its owner. To kidnap his subordinate without any prior notice and use such cruel means on the latter, it was clear that the other party was undermining him.

"What do I mean?" King Zhongqing asked in a mocking tone. "Bring Vice Hall Master Ming in here!"

Hualala!

As he said those words, two guards escorted a figure in.

Upon seeing the other party's appearance, Zhang Xuan's face turned livid.

He recognized that figure. He was the vice head of the Jingyuan City Poison Hall, Ming Zhen!

Back then, he willfully chose to side with his own student and attempted to kill Zhang Xuan. Unfortunately, Zhang Xuan's soul happened to be out at the moment, and eventually, the entire Poison Hall was reduced to waste as a result of his actions... But wasn't he killed by Hall Master Ruo Qingyuan back then?

Why was he still alive?

And from the looks of it, he wasn't even in the slightest injured... On the contrary, it seemed like he had even managed to advance his cultivation up a notch.

Could it be that something had happened to the Poison Hall?

Furthermore, despite Sun Qiang being bound by heavy chains, there was nothing on Ming Zhen at all. It was as if he was an honored guest of King Zhongqing!

Zhang Xuan's face turned livid.

"Paying respects to Your Highness!" Ming Zhen clasped his fist.

King Zhongqing nodded and said, "Speak of what you know!"

"I used to be the vice head of the Jingyuan Empire Poison Hall, located in the territory of Hongyuan Empire. Two months ago, Sun Qiang altered his appearance and dropped by our Poison Hall, claiming to be the successor of the Poison Hall's founder. He displayed exceptional mastery in the Way of Poison that even I am unable to match up with..." Ming Zhen swiftly revealed everything that had happened at the Poison Hall.

"... After which, he entrusted the founder to Poison Hall Bai and Poison Master Hai. Initially, I was to be executed for my actions, but it's fortunate that the one who was responsible for executing me was my student, and it was due to that that I was able to escape with my life..."

"The successor of the Poison Hall's founder? If I hadn't heard this with my own ears, I would truly dare not believe such a matter. Zhang shi, this Sun Qiang over here is your subordinate, and yet, he is also a formidable poison master as well. What do you have to say for yourself?" Sneering coldly, King Zhongqing gazed down at Zhang Xuan haughtily.

"You are accusing me of colluding with the poison masters over this?" Zhang Xuan was still wondering if the other party had managed to obtain some kind of evidence regarding the matter, but it turned out to be this much only. Shaking his head, he continued, "Putting aside the fact that this Ming Zhen fellow over here has dubious backgrounds, just the fact that he's a vice head of the Poison Hall should warrant him a death penalty. So, why is he standing right here, honored as a guest in your manor? Could it be that... King Zhongqing has colluded with the Poison Hall? Are you, in fact, a poison master, just like what others say of you?"

"Audacious!" King Zhongqing bellowed furiously.

"You are the one being audacious over here!" Zhang Xuan interjected with a roar. "There are plenty of people in the world who goes by the name of Sun Qiang, and yet, based on this kind of indeterminate evidence, you kidnapped my butler and tortured him? If I were to capture a dog and confer it the name of King Zhongqing, can I say that you are a dog? If my butler is truly the successor of the Poison Hall's founder, you will have long been poisoned to death for treating him in such a manner!"

"You..." Not expecting the other party to be so crude in his words, King Zhongqing nearly spurted blood. With a face livid with rage, he harrumphed, "My men proceeded carefully and subdued your butler before he could even retaliate, so naturally, he wouldn't have a chance to strike at all. There is no doubt about Ming Zhen's identity, and he has voluntarily left the Poison Hall to side with us. In fact, he has led our men to eradicate the Jingyuan City Poison Hall, and his merits are more than sufficient to make up for his wrongdoings!"

"Eradicate the Jingyuan City Poison Hall?" 'Gedeng', Zhang Xuan's heart skipped a beat.

As formidable as the Jingyuan City Poison Hall was, if there was an insider to lead the elite forces of the Qingyuan Empire in, it would indeed be difficult for the Poison Hall to stand its ground.

If the Poison Hall were to be destroyed, what would become of Elder Xu and the others?

He hadn't thought that so much would happen over a short frame of two months.

"Indeed! No matter how he was before, his accomplishments are more than sufficient to bring credibility to his words. Furthermore, we have corroborated his words with the confessions of the other poison masters of the Jingyuan City Poison Hall, so there is no doubt about the authenticity of this

matter!"

Standing up, King Zhongqing flung his sleeves and harrumphed, "Despite being a master teacher, you actually kept such a reprehensible poison master by your side. This is a blatant infringement of the Master Teacher Pavilion's rules. For the safety of Qingyuan City, I am obliged to apprehend you."

"For the safety of Qingyuan City? I, Zhang Xuan, am an upright master teacher of the Master Teacher Pavilion. If there's any problem with me, it should be the Master Teacher Pavilion to pass judgement. And you? Pardon me, but I don't believe that you are in charge of the Qingyuan Empire Master Teacher Pavilion!"

When a master teacher erred, only the Master Teacher Pavilion was qualified to judge them. A mere King of the Conferred Empire had no rights to take things in his own hands!

"I know that I'm not qualified to judge this matter, so I specially reported this matter to Vice Pavilion Master Tian Qing of the Master Teacher Pavilion to have him judge this matter!" Saying these words, King Zhongqing clasped his fist towards the hunched over elder seated beside him.

"Tian Qing?" Hearing that name, Zhang Xuan recalled a matter, and his eyes narrowed.

Huala!

But before he could say a word, the elder stood up, and it was only then did everyone notice the seven stars on the emblem pinned on his chest.

A 7-star master teacher!

"Vice pavilion master?" Luo Qiqi and Yu Fei-er were alarmed, and they quickly turned their gazes towards Zhang Xuan.

If the Master Teacher Pavilion wasn't involved in this matter, Zhang Xuan might still be able to use his identity as a master teacher to avoid this matter. Yet, the other party actually brought

a vice pavilion master of the Qingyuan Empire Master Teacher Pavilion in. This would really complicate matters.

"He sure did come prepared." Swiftly calming down, Zhang Xuan began reanalyzing the situation.

Previously, he had heard Wu Shi briefly introduce the current circumstances within the Qingyuan Empire Master Teacher Pavilion.

The current pavilion master, Gou Tianze, was a Leaving Aperture realm primary stage expert. However, he had retired from managing the affairs of the Master Teacher Pavilion since many years ago, and currently, Vice Pavilion Master Tian was the one who was in charge.

As such, despite being a vice pavilion master, Tian Qing wielded authority comparable to the pavilion master himself, making him one of the most powerful individuals in Qingyuan City.

Zhang Xuan had thought this would only be a small conflict; perhaps he might have accidentally crossed King Zhongqing somewhere and the latter wanted to embarrass him. He hadn't thought that the latter would actually bring Vice Pavilion Master Tian into the picture as well.

As the person in charge of the regional Master Teacher Pavilion, Vice Pavilion Master Tian had the right to liaise with the headquarters. If the other party were to judge that he had colluded with the Poison Hall, he would never be able to cleanse his reputation.

But of course, while the Jingyuan City Poison Hall had a poor reputation, it hadn't really caused too much harm. At the very most, being associated with it would only tarnish Zhang Xuan's reputation.

"Zhang Shi, I have heard of your affairs, and I know that you are a person who possesses exceptional talent and capabilities." Vice

Pavilion Master Tian turned to Zhang Xuan and smiled. "King Zhongqing is in charge of the defenses of Qingyuan City. Given that he has uncovered evidence that suggests that Sun Qiang is a poison master, it's his responsibility to look into the matter, so I hope that you don't take this personally. The reason why he has invited you over to his manor instead of the Master Teacher Pavilion is in hopes of not blowing the matter up. After all, such a matter would soil the reputation of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, and this isn't something that any one of us would like to see."

At this point, Vice Pavilion Master Tian glanced at Ming Zhen before continuing on, "I have personally investigated the background of Poison Master Ming Zhen and the words that he has spoken, and I believe that his words can be trusted. However, worry not. Even though Sun Qiang is a poison master, the Master Teacher Pavilion will take into account the fact that you are unaware of the matter when passing judgement."

"Even though Sun Qiang is a poison master?" Hearing how affirmative Vice Pavilion Master Tian's words were, Zhang Xuan frowned in displeasure, "Since Vice Pavilion Master Tian has seen this matter from the start to the end, surely you should be clearer than anyone else here whether Sun Qiang is a poison master or not, right?"

While a poison master may look like any other cultivator on the surface, their frequent consumption and concocting of poison would inevitably result in some internal changes in their body. In fact, there were some formidable poison masters who could even poison an entire city to death with just a droplet of their blood.

On the other hand, Sun Qiang cultivated the orthodox and upright simplified version of the Heaven's Path Divine Art. His zhenqi was pure and attributeless, and that should be more than sufficient evidence to prove that he wasn't a poison master.

Considering that Vice Pavilion Tian was a 7-star pinnacle master

teacher, he should know better than anyone that Sun Qiang wasn't a poison master. Yet, to be insisting that Sun Qiang was indeed a poison master here, it was obvious that he had chosen to side with King Zhongqing!

"Even though this Sun Qiang over here doesn't have the prowess of a 6-star poison master, his very deed of escorting the founder of the Poison Hall back to the Poison Hall headquarters is a grievous mistake in itself! The founder of the Poison Hall is said to possess the Constitution of Disaster, and as long as she desires so, she could easily bring great catastrophe upon mankind. You might not understand because you haven't seen the records regarding the war between mankind and the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe several dozen millenniums ago, but I had the privilege of looking through them in the Master Teacher Pavilion of the Empire Alliance. It was truly a huge tragedy that could hardly be described with words. Countless master teachers and innocent souls had died of poison in the long war, and indubitably, the founder of the Poison Hall had a significant role to play in the matter!" Vice Pavilion Master Tian spoke righteously with the air of one who was worried for the future of the world.

Mankind had suffered great casualties in the fight against the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, especially from the lethal poison they utilized. If not for the founder of the Poison Hall, there wouldn't have been a poison master occupation in the first place, and such a tragedy wouldn't have occurred.

It could be said that the founder was the very enemy of mankind herself!

"As a master teacher, you have a duty to mankind. And yet, you allowed your own subordinate to act willfully and escort the founder of the Poison Hall back to her place. You have truly let all of us down this time around. " Vice Pavilion Master Tian sighed deeply. "However, if you were to confess to this matter, I'll implore the Master Teacher Pavilion to show leniency to you."

"Vice Pavilion Master Tian, do you honestly believe the nonsense about the founder of the Poison Hall?" Zhang Xuan shook his head. "If I recall correctly, the founder is a figure from the same era as Kong shi. Not even Kong shi could survive the trial of time, so do you think that it makes sense for the founder of the Poison Hall to still be alive at this point in time?"

"Naturally, I am skeptical of the matter as well. However, Ming Zhen has no reason to lie either. From what I know, even a Celestial Master Teacher has recently appeared in the world, so I don't think that the revival of the founder of the Poison Hall is something too absurd to believe." Vice Pavilion Head Tian said.

"Celestial Master Teacher?" Zhang Xuan scoffed. "How can that be? If that is true, the matter would have long spread far and wide in the world. There's no way that I, as the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, would be oblivious to it!"

"It's a deduction made based on the recent happenings in our Teacher Acknowledgement Hall. Currently, the news has been sealed for fear of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe learning of the matter, so only a handful of people in our Qingyuan branch knows of this matter." Vice Pavilion Head Tian replied. "It might sound preposterous, but as a master teacher, we have a duty to the masses. It's better to be safe than sorry."

"So, Vice Pavilion Master Tian intends to..."

"Simple. For the grievous crimes that he has committed, Sun Qiang must be executed on the spot. On the other hand, Zhang shi, while you might not have played a direct role in the matter, your oversight in managing your subordinates have indirectly resulted in the happening of this tragedy. As such, you must be punished for your actions as well. You will be exiled to the Subterranean Gallery for three months in order to make up for your wrongdoings with merit." Vice Pavilion Master Tian said.

"You want to execute Sun Qiang on the spot and exile me to the

Subterranean Gallery?" Zhang Xuan felt as if he had heard a hilarious joke.

He abruptly stood up and patted his bottom before turning his gaze towards Vice Pavilion Master Tian, "What if..."

"... I refuse?"

Chapter 1148: Wreaking Havoc In the King Manor

Even though three months in the Subterranean Gallery couldn't be considered to be a severe punishment, it couldn't be said to be a light one either.

The Subterranean Gallery was the intersection point between the Master Teacher Continent and the otherworldly battlefields. As such, it was constantly plagued with overwhelming killing intent. From time to time, Otherworldly Demons might even appear. Without a doubt, it was one of the most dangerous lands on the Master Teacher Continent, and most of those who ventured into its depths never return alive.

Only master teachers who had committed unpardonable crimes or wanted to make one last contribution to mankind would apply to enter those lands.

This was also the same with School Head Lu Feng back then.

Putting aside the fact that Sun Qiang wasn't a poison master, even if he was, he hadn't committed any harm to others, so how could he be said to have committed a grievous crime? Not even a master teacher had the right to claim the life of an innocent man! And since Sun Qiang hadn't erred, Zhang Xuan couldn't possibly be implicated into the matter as well!

For the vice head of the Master Teacher Pavilion, a person who wields great authority in his hands, to judge a matter in such a manner... How ludicrous!

"Vice Pavilion Master Tian is already being magnanimous by showing you leniency for your actions, you really don't know what is best for you!" King Zhongqing roared furiously.

"You can have this kind of leniency for yourself!" Zhang Xuan couldn't be bothered with King Zhongqing any longer. Instead, he

walked straight up to Sun Qiang.

Huala!

Seeing Zhang Xuan walking towards them, the two guards who were standing beside Sun Qiang swiftly drew their weapons warily.

However, barely after their swords left their sheath, they abruptly shattered into two with a crisp echo, and the tip of their swords flew into the distance. Right after that, the two guards were suddenly sent flying with a deep moan, crashing heavily onto a pillar right outside the hall before blacking out.

At this point, Zhang Xuan was already standing before Sun Qiang, and sighing deeply, he said, "You have suffered..."

In the next moment, the Golden Soul Lock on Sun Qiang suddenly flew out and fell onto the ground. Following that, Zhang Xuan flicked his finger towards Sun Qiang.

Tzzzzz!

The latter's injuries began recovering at a pace visible to the eye.

As Sun Qiang's cultivation was far lower than his, it didn't take long for the Heaven's Path zhenqi to heal his injuries.

"Audacious! Zhang Xuan, this is Qingyuan City, not your Hongyuan Empire! To disregard the earnest lecturing of a senior master teacher and act on your own accord, showing no regards for the law at all, a person like you isn't worthy to be a master teacher. Men, take him down!" King Zhongqing roared.

Hualala!

Right after saying those words, a bunch of men suddenly barged into the hall.

"Young Master..."

Seeing that the Young Master was actually standing against the First King of Qingyuan Conferred Empire for him, Sun Qiang couldn't help but feel a surge of warmth run through his heart.

Falling out with a vice head of a Conferred Empire Master Teacher Pavilion could possibly mean giving his future away, and yet, the Young Master still did so unhesitatingly just to save a servant like him... To him, this was a debt of gratitude greater than the heaven itself.

Luo Qiqi and Yu Fei-er also swiftly moved over to Zhang Xuan and stood by his side as they warily scanned their surroundings.

Despite the sudden onslaught of guards, Zhang Xuan didn't pay them any heed. Instead, he turned straight towards King Zhongqing and uttered coldly, "You wish to capture me? King Zhongqing, it seems like you really don't fear death. Or perhaps, do you honestly think that I dare not kill you?"

"Kill me? You? Hahaha, it seems like becoming the principal of Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy has really got to your head! A mere 6-star master teacher like you dare to speak of killing me... The fact that you disrespected Vice Pavilion Tian is more than sufficient to have you indicted on the grounds of insubordination. Today, I shall help the Master Teacher Pavilion purge its black sheep!" Sneering coldly, the aura shrouding King Zhongqing swiftly intensified, and it took a mere blink of an eye for it to reach its peak.

Under the immense power he was emanating, the surrounding air began to distort. This was the overwhelming might of a Saint 4-dan cultivator, a Primordial Spirit realm expert!

His strength had already surpassed the head of the Formation Master Guild, Guild Leader Han, reaching a level on par with Wu shi prior to entering the Qiu Wu Palace.

"King Zhongqing, no matter what, Zhang shi is still our master teacher. Even if he has erred, he can only be judged in our Master Teacher Pavilion. It'll do to just capture him, make sure to spare his life..." Seeing that King Zhongqing was going to make a move, Vice Pavilion Master Tian instructed.

"Rest assured, Vice Pavilion Master Tian. I won't go too far..." Sneering coldly, King Zhongqing thrust his palm forward, and in an instant, it felt as if ominous clouds had gathered within the hall, and a powerful might reminiscent of the relentless waves of the ocean began crashing down upon Zhang Xuan.

On top of that, perhaps due to cultivating some kind of secret art, the First King's zhenqi was not only condensed and powerful, it was also imbued with the scent of the battlefield, leaving one feeling as if one was standing amidst of mountains of corpses and rivers of blood.

"That is... Scarlet Robe of Carnage?" Upon seeing the move, Luo Qiqi's eyebrows knitted together warily.

"Scarlet Robe of Carnage?"

"It's a technique that boasts of the strongest killing intent in Qingyuan Empire. Those who cultivate this technique must use fresh blood as a medium in order to advance their mastery in the technique. Once one starts practicing the technique, there's no turning back. The very sight of blood will trigger one's bloodlust, causing one to go into a manic. It's a truly sinister technique. Even the Art of Drawing Oceans will struggle to be a match for it!" Luo Qiqi explained grimly.

"However, due to the innately destructive nature of the technique, there was no master teacher or combat master who is willing to learn it... Who could have thought that a King of Qingyuan Empire would actually learn such a depraved technique! Teacher, you must be careful!"

"A mere small fry!"

In contrast to Luo Qiqi's anxiety, Zhang Xuan didn't show the slightest hint of panic. Instead, with a derisive smile, he flicked his finger.

Sou!

The Golden Soul Lock immediately flew towards King Zhongqing at a speed as swift as a streak of lightning, and in just an instant, it collided with the powerful palm strike that King Zhongqing executed an instant ago.

Astonishingly, the palm strike didn't even hinder the advancement of the Golden Soul Lock by even the slightest. It swiftly overwhelmed the palm thrust and arrived right before King Zhongqing

Peng!

The Golden Soul Lock struck King Zhongqing's chest squarely, and the latter's face immediately reddened from the impact before spurting a mouthful of blood.

Deng deng deng deng!

He swiftly retreated eight steps in order to ward off the impact before crashing into the exquisitely carved wooden chair behind him. The chair swiftly caved in to the pressure and exploded into countless smithereens.

King Zhongqing had to drive his zhenqi furiously and exert a relentless wave of might behind before he was able to finally steady his figure. At this point, he felt his blood within his body billowing furiously, and his face paled from frailty. He stared at the young man before him in disbelief, unable to accept what he had just experienced.

He was a Saint 4-dan Primordial Spirit realm pinnacle expert whereas the other party was only a Saint 2-dan Spiritual Perception realm pinnacle cultivator... There was a gap of two whole realms between them!

Logically speaking, this should be an unbreachable gap for any cultivator, no matter how skilled a fighter one was, and yet... the other party was actually able to neutralize his palm strike with such ease and even knock him back at that...

Too frightening!

King Zhongqing was not the only one astonished by the happenings, Vice Pavilion Master Tian was startled as well.

Zhang Xuan's fighting prowess had far surpassed his imagination. Such an outcome had never flashed across his mind, not even once.

"No wonder you dared to act so arrogantly, so you do have something up your sleeves. However... if this is all you got, I'll make sure you dearly regret your actions!" Gesturing to Vice Pavilion Master Tian that he didn't have to make a move, King Zhongqing roared furiously as he flicked his five fingers forth furiously. At the same time, he flicked his wrist forcefully, and his palm fell downward with a shape reminiscent of a lotus leaf.

"Three Autumn Palm!" Zhang Xuan recognized the battle technique.

Having browsed through all of the books in the Combat Master Hall's Martial Arts Division and internalized them, he couldn't be any more familiar with this battle technique.

Three Autumns of Osmanthus, Ten Li of Lotus Flower! 1

The might of this technique was comparable to the Grand Constellation Finger, and it was relatively famous for its difficulty within the Combat Master Hall. There were many combat masters who had to spend decades on it before managing to achieve some degree of mastery in it. Yet, King Zhongqing had actually managed to achieve a mastery of Major Accomplishment in it!

Such a formidable battle technique paired with the Scarlet Robe of Carnage made the hall feel as if it had turned into a marshland. Crimson bloodied lotuses bloomed one after another eerily, and it felt as if they would reap the soul and life of those who dared to approach them.

"This is indeed a powerful battle technique. Even Division Head

Liao and the others would have to retreat temporarily before its immense might, but... it's a pity that you picked the wrong opponent!" Shaking his head, Zhang Xuan took a step forward instead of retreating, stepping right upon one of the scarlet lotuses. He raised his finger and tapped forward.

Weng!

The brilliance of the stars shimmered on his fingertip, outshining even the radiance of the Night Illumination Pearls embedded on the roof.

A furious surge of zhenqi burst forth from his fingertip, tearing apart the Three Autumn Palm in an instant. In the next moment, blood spurted wildly from King Zhongqing's mouth, and he was forced to retreat in a fluster yet again. A few steps later, his back crashed heavily onto the wall behind him.

Hualala!

Dust fell from the ceiling, cloaking his figure.

"You know of the flaws of the Three Autumn Palm?" King Zhongqing couldn't believe his eyes.

Under normal circumstances, given that the Grand Constellation Finger and Three Autumn Palm were two battle techniques of equivalent might, even if they were to clash directly with one another, he shouldn't have suffered such an utter defeat. But... somehow, Zhang Xuan seemed to have found the flaws in his technique and aimed his attack directly at it, causing his zhenqi to wither. As a result, his offense was subdued in an instant, causing him to sustain severe injuries.

Zhang Xuan couldn't be bothered to explain anything to King Zhongqing at all. Placing his hands behind his back loftily, he calmly turned to Sun Qiang and said, "He has caused you great suffering, so how do you think we should deal with him?"

"Since he used the Golden Soul Lock to pierce my chest, it's only

right to return the favor to him!" Sun Qiang spat through gritted teeth.

"That's simple!" Zhang Xuan smiled softly as he raised his palm once more.

Huala!

The Golden Soul Lock on the ground immediately flew into the air and slithered menacingly as if a vicious snake.

On the other hand, seeing that Zhang Xuan was actually discussing with a mere subordinate on how he should be dealt with, King Zhongqing felt deeply humiliated. His face turned crimson, and he bellowed furiously, "What are you all waiting for? Take him down!"

Huala!

Right after those words were spoken, the guards standing in the surroundings immediately charged forward with furious battle cries.

"Hmph!"

Couldn't even be bothered to turn around, Zhang Xuan stomped his feet on the ground.

Huala!

A surge of zhenqi rippled from his feet, and in the blink of an eye, the formation shrouding the hall came to life, blocking all of the guards outside. No matter how hard they knocked against the formation, it simply wouldn't budge.

"Even you are nothing to me. Do you think that a bunch of small fries will be able to stop me?" Zhang Xuan glanced at King Zhongqing coldly.

Having mastered everything within the Combat Master Hall, Zhang Xuan's prowess could be considered to be invincible amongst Primordial Spirit realm. Even if King Zhongqing was an

exceptional cultivator, his strength still meant nothing before him.

Huala!

Right after saying those words, the Golden Soul Lock rose up once more, seemingly ready to devour the figure before him whole.

"Vice Hall Master Tian, save me!" In face of the monstrous strength of the young man before him, the desperate King Zhongqing could only turn to the elder beside him for help.

"This is enough. Any more than this, and I will have to issue a master teacher arrest warrant on you..."

At this point, Vice Pavilion Master Tian could also see that King Zhongqing wasn't a match either. Shaking his head, he stepped forward and raised his palm, wanting to stop the Golden Soul Lock from making a move against King Zhongqing. However, in that instant, with a loud whiz, a massive cauldron abruptly fell from the sky.

Putong!

It fell straight on the head of Vice Pavilion Master Tian, causing the latter to collapse onto the ground, sprawled over in a '大' shape.

"Master, where is the fellow whom you want me to pummel? Watch as I reduce that bastard to cinders for you!"

"..." Zhang Xuan.

"..." Vice Pavilion Master Tian Qing.

Chapter 1149: Pummeling The Vice Pavilion Head

The one who was speaking was the Golden Origin Cauldron!

Zhang Xuan had learned spirit enchantment previously at the Spirit Awakener Guild, and in the three days he spent in the Combat Master Hall, he found some spare time to wake the Golden Origin Cauldron up from its coma.

It might have been a difficult feat for any other spirit awakener, but as one who had cultivated the Heaven's Path Spirit Enchantment Art, as long as he were to be a bit more meticulous, it actually wasn't something too difficult to achieve.

Prior to heading to entering the Qiu Wu Palace, the Golden Origin Cauldron had already been at Primordial Spirit realm pinnacle. While the onslaught of the lightning had caused its spirit to go dormant, it had also tempered it, allowing it to achieve a breakthrough swiftly after it awoke from its coma, achieving the same level of strength as Wu shi, Half-Leaving Aperture realm.

As long as Zhang Xuan could find fitting materials to reforge it, it was only a matter of time before it achieved a breakthrough to Leaving Aperture realm.

Given the Golden Origin Cauldron rise in power, as well as the advantage it wielded as a Saint intermediate-tier artifact, Vice Pavilion Master Tian was already smashed into the ground before he could even process what was going on. Truly, a pitiful state he was in.

"He's right below you... I only asked you to stop him, not to kill him..." Seeing how unreliable the Golden Origin Cauldron was, smashing Vice Pavilion Master Tian into the ground as soon as it appeared, Zhang Xuan slapped his forehead, speechless.

Can't you at least take a look before making a move?

Look at what you have done. Now that a vice head of the Master Teacher Pavilion had been smacked into the ground, how should this matter be resolved?

"He's below me?" Taken aback, the Golden Origin Cauldron slowly shifted sideward before seeing a huge '大' character on the ground with a figure embedded in it.

"Ah... Master, I didn't do it on purpose..." the Golden Origin Cauldron said apologetically.

"You're courting death!"

Hong long!

Before the Golden Origin Cauldron could finish his words, Vice Pavilion Master Tian abruptly flew out from the depression of the ground, and powerful aura burst from his acupoints, rippling into the surroundings.

At this point, he felt so furious that he could explode on the spot.

For the person who commanded the entire Qingyuan Empire Master Teacher Pavilion to be crushed beneath the bottom of a mere Saint-tier artifact, he felt so humiliated that he could just blow up.

"Zhang Xuan, it is insubordination for you to order your Saint-tier artifact to assault a 7-star master teacher. This is a blatant disregard for the dignity of the Way of Teacher, a complete lack of respect for your elders. A person like you isn't worthy of being a master teacher!" Roaring furiously, Vice Pavilion Master Tian thrust his palm towards Zhang Xuan.

It must be said that the might wielded by Vice Pavilion Master Tian was indeed fearsome.

Even King Zhongqing was nowhere on par with him. That single palm strike caused the surrounding air current to suddenly billow furiously, and it felt as if the entire hall would collapse under the pressure at any time soon.

"Your opponent is me!" Seeing that the other party was attempting to attack its owner, the Golden Origin Cauldron roared in anger.

It wasn't easy for it to regain consciousness, and it had been wanting to find an opportunity to perform before its master. Yet, that fellow actually snubbed him and went straight for its owner. This was unforgivable!

Hu la!

The massive cauldron flung itself forcefully towards Vice Pavilion Master Tian.

Peng!

The incredible momentum of the charging cauldron succeeded in neutralizing Vice Pavilion Master's palm strike in an instant. However, at the same time, the impact of the collision also caused the Golden Origin Cauldron to skid back for several dozen meters before coming to a halt.

The both of them were actually equally matched!

As expected of a vice head of the Master Teacher Pavilion, he is indeed formidable! Zhang Xuan thought.

If he had to face Vice Pavilion Master Tian in a straightforward battle, there was a very good chance that it would end in his defeat.

While he was already invincible against all the Primordial Spirit realm cultivators, he was still a little lacking from being able to deal with Half-Leaving Aperture realm experts.

Knowing that it would take a long time before there was a conclusion for the battle between Vice Pavilion Master Qing and the Golden Origin Cauldron, Zhang Xuan decisively turned his attention away from them and turned his sights back to King Zhongqing, "It's your turn!"

"You... Vice Pavilion Master Qing is here! If you were to make a

move against me here, there's no way he will let you off. You're courting death!" King Zhongqing roared furiously.

All along, he had thought that the figure he was going to deal with was just an insignificant figure from an insignificant land. As long as he were to pull his weight, the other party would surely be swiftly cave in, Who could have thought that the other party was not only strong, he was even brazen enough to make a move against the Vice Pavilion Master Qing...

Formalities were extremely important to master teachers—after all, only one who conducted himself properly could be qualified to lecture others—and assaulting a higher ranked master teacher was a severe breach of the formalities.

If the Master Teacher Pavilion were to judge the other party for this matter, being stripped of his master teacher license could be said to be the least of his concerns. More than that, he could very well be executed on the spot to make an example for others to see!

And yet, to do so for a mere subordinate... Was that fellow insane?

"Whether I am courting death or not, it's none of your business. However, for hurting my butler, you have to pay the price." Zhang Xuan uttered coldly as he flicked his wrist.

Huala!

The Golden Soul Lock suddenly leaped up and pierced King Zhongqing.

Puhe!

It stabbed right into his chest.

The Golden Soul Lock had the ability to seal cultivation. As soon as it entered King Zhongqing's body, the latter's aura immediately began wilting. The excruciating pain of a foreign object piercing into his body left him spasming frenziedly, and for that moment, he thought that he would go insane from the pain.

"He's powerless now, go and exact your vengeance." Zhang Xuan waved his hand leisurely.

In his heart, Sun Qiang was as important as his direct disciples. The other party's act of kidnapping Sun Qiang and deploying heavy torture on him had truly touched his bottom line, and it was already an act of mercy that he didn't kill the other party on the spot.

"Yes!" Sun Qiang walked up to King Zhongqing, and gazing down on the latter, he sneered, "You had fun kidnapping me, didn't you? You should have a taste of your own medicine..."

He flicked his wrist, whipped out a dagger, and swiped it right into King Zhongqing's body.

Even though King Zhongqing was a Primordial Spirit realm expert, he hadn't cultivated his body to a high indestructible level like Zhang Xuan, and his cultivation was also sealed by the Golden Soul Lock as well. As such, the dagger sunk right into King Zhongqing's body, and blood began flowing out from his body.

"You!!!"

The immense pain caused King Zhongqing to howl in agony. However, before he could finish his words, he saw Sun Qiang whipping out a jar of salt from somewhere and spreading it generously on his wound.

"Bear with it, I'll help you apply some medicine now..."

"..." King Zhongqing.

After applying a fair amount of salt on the wound, Sun Qiang picked up his dagger once more, brandished it to create another wound, and proceeded on to apply salt on it as well.

Zhang Xuan, having watched the happenings up to this point, couldn't help but avert his gaze... It was simply too cruel!

However, he could tell that the Sun Qiang had been put through

far more brutal torture than this while healing him up previously. In a sense, Sun Qiang's rage and means weren't unjustified.

On the other side, Vice Pavilion Master Tian and the Golden Origin Cauldron were still battling with one another, and both sides were equally matched. Thus, Zhang Xuan turned his sights to Ming Zhen instead.

The ex-vice head of the Poison Hall had attempted to escape as soon as he realized that the situation had gone awry, but the activated formation around the hall not only prevented those outside from entering, it also prevented those within from leaving.

Seeing that Zhang Xuan was staring at him intently, Ming Zhen backed away in horror.

"Come over!" Zhang Xuan roared.

With a flick of his wrist, Ming Zhen suddenly felt a powerful force pulling him right in front of Zhang Xuan before binding him tightly, preventing him from moving.

Zhang Xuan set up an isolation barrier with a wave of his hand to prevent Luo Qiqi and the others from hearing anything before asking coldly, "What happened to the Poison Hall? Where is Elder Xu You and the others?"

"Y-you, how do you know about Xu You?" Ming Zhen was astonished to hear that name coming out of Zhang Xuan's mouth.

Back then, when Zhang Xuan headed to the Poison Hall, he had disguised him and assumed the identity of 'Sun Qiang'. As such, Ming Zhen was unable to recognize the young man standing before him.

"Wait, it can't be that... you are Sun Qiang?"

Ming Zhen was no fool either. It took only a moment for him to understand what was going on, and his eyes narrowed in horror.

"Not bad, I hope that you can remain this intelligent when you

answer my questions." Zhang Xuan's lips curled up as he patted Ming Zhen's shoulders, sending a surge of zhenqi into the other party's body.

"AHHHHH!!!"

The zhenqi within Ming Zhen's body warped into lethal poison, leaving cold sweat pouring down his convulsing body.

Not even Poison Master Hai and the others were able to endure the agony of the Heaven's Path zhenqi, let alone him.

"You are... a master teacher... It's already a grievous crime... for you to disregard Vice Pavilion Master Tian's authority... If you were to kill me... the Master Teacher Pavilion will conduct a thorough investigation of you..." Clenching his fists to bear the unbearable pain, Ming Zhen said.

Knowing that the man before him had a close relationship with Elder Xu You, he swiftly realized that the young man could possibly hold a grudge against him due to his actions which resulted in the annihilation of the Poison Hall. As such, he hurriedly said those words in hopes that he could convince the other party to stop.

"It seems like you aren't as intelligent as I thought. I only want to hear things I want to hear. Since you know that I'm the successor of the Poison Hall's founder, you should also know that I have the means to end your life discreetly without having anyone trace it back to me." Zhang Xuan replied impassively.

It might have been difficult for any other master teachers to kill an individual without having the Master Teacher Pavilion trace the case back to them, but Zhang Xuan was a poison master. He had many ways of killing a person without leaving behind any clues to him.

"I..." Hearing those bone-chilling words, Ming Zhen realized that the other party would really do so without any hesitation. Thus, he

gritted his teeth and said, "Back then, after I fled from the Poison Hall, I headed straight here."

"You headed towards Qingyuan City? You are acquainted with King Zhongqing beforehand?" Zhang Xuan asked.

After fleeing from the Poison Hall, in order to ensure that no one would pursue him, he would surely head in a direction where he deemed that he would be safe. The fact that he chose to head here meant that it was likely that he had already known King Zhongqing beforehand, and he was certain that the latter could provide him cover.

"That's right, we have some business dealings with one another. I sold him quite a handful of lethal poison, and in exchange, he gave me many valuable cultivation resources..." Ming Zhen confessed.

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan's face turned grim.

It seemed like Yu Fei-er's news was accurate. However, instead of being a poison master himself, King Zhongqing just had dealings with the Poison Hall.

Nevertheless, there were still some doubts about the matter.

"You said that he purchased lethal poison from you, but is he able to use it?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

Putting aside the concoction of poison, the usage of poison was also an incredibly profound art as well. Even if those who weren't poison masters were to obtain lethal poison, they would only be able to use it crudely, making it highly possible that they would be discovered.

This was the case with You Xu back then as well. Despite receiving lethal poison from the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, his ability to utilize poison was lacking, which prevented him from using it too often.

"I don't know about that... However, he has an exceptionally high demand for high-grade poisons. Most of the grade-7 poisons which

I have applied by the headquarters ended up being sold to him." Ming Zhen dared not to hide anything from Zhang Xuan.

"I see." Zhang Xuan replied as he shot a doubtful gaze towards King Zhongqing.

That fellow was an honored King of Qingyuan Empire, and there didn't seem to be any incidents where the other party used the poison he had purchased to commit atrocities. As such, despite being a master teacher, he wasn't in a good position to interfere too much in this matter either.

Otherwise, it could very well cause some strife between Qingyuan Empire and the Master Teacher Pavilion.

Since King Zhongqing was the one to provoke him through Sun Qiang first, Zhang Xuan's actions could still be justified as self-defense. However, if he wanted to have King Zhongqing indicted for the purchase of poison, he would have to go through the royal court.

"What happened to Xu You and the others?" Zhang Xuan turned his attention back to Ming Zhen and asked.

"I spent my whole life toiling for the Poison Hall, only to be sentenced to a death penalty in the end. Indignant, I sought King Zhongqing, hoping to use his hand to return me justice. Yet, wanting to make use of this incident to win himself some merit, King Zhongqing ignored my opposition and captured everyone from the Poison Hall. Those who retaliated against him back then have all been killed..."

At this point, bitterness surfaced on Ming Zhen's face. "As much as I hate Xu You and the others for putting me in such a plight, I still view myself as a member of the Poison Hall. It's honestly not my wish to see this happen."

Ming Zhen shook his head. What was done was done, nothing he said would change anything at this point in time.

"However, I can tell you that Elder Xu You isn't dead yet!"

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